the weekly Standard

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DARWINISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS
ANDREW FERGUSON

# The Mystery of Michael Bloomberg

Why does New York's popular but mediocre mayor think he should run for president?

BY FRED SIEGEL & MICHAEL GOODWIN

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*—Kori Schake*

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*—Henry R. Nau*

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# The Romance of Halberstam

The accidental death of David Halberstam, onetime war correspondent and author of *The Best and the Brightest* (1972), has inspired the sort of mournful, sometimes impassioned, obituary language reserved for deceased journalists. The Scrapbook, in its wisdom, looks upon this as a form of professional courtesy: Only among journalists, after all, is the death of a journalist a national calamity.

Yet Halberstam's demise has yielded an unexpected chief mourner: Democratic foreign policy guru Richard Holbrooke, who first met Halberstam in 1963 when Holbrooke was a Foreign Service officer in Saigon. Holbrooke wrote an op-ed memoir in the *Washington Post* about Halberstam's Vietnam reporting ("In long overpowering sentences, he conveyed deep anger and a sense of betrayal") and recounted what he must have assumed was a charming story about Halberstam and fellow journalist Neil Sheehan who, in Holbrooke's word, "despised" the senior U.S. commander in South Vietnam, Gen. Paul Harkins. "After some wine," wrote Holbrooke, "they conducted a mock trial of the four-star general for incompetence and dereliction of duty. In his rumbling, powerful voice, David pronounced Harkins 'guilty' of each charge, after which Neil loudly carried out the 'sentence': execution by imaginary firing squad against the back wall of the restaurant."

Next, Holbrooke turned up in a brief Halberstam essay by George Packer in the *New Yorker*. Once again, Halberstam's dyspepsia was front and center: He felt a "personal, vengeful rage" against American officialdom in South Vietnam, according to Packer, and at a Fourth of July party at the ambassador's residence in Saigon—The Scrapbook could see this coming—"refused to shake hands with General Paul Harkins." Then Holbrooke made an interesting observation: "David changed war reporting forever," he said to Packer. "He made it not only possible but even romantic to write that your own side was misleading the public about how the war was going."

From The Scrapbook's perspective, this was one of those unintentionally revealing moments, for not only did Holbrooke capture the essence of the Halberstam mythology in one sentence, but he diagnosed everything that has gone wrong with American war journalism in the half-century since Halberstam and Neil Sheehan passed through Saigon.

Of course, it was always possible for American journalists to write critically about their "own side" in wartime—even George Washington had his detractors—but until Halberstam (and others) it was not considered "romantic." Now, alas, such pathology in journalism is not just pertinent to careers, but obligatory for success. It certainly explains the determination of the media to concentrate on failure, to marshal its facts in support of ideology, and to regard its "own side" with suspicion and hostility, no matter the circumstances. As legacies go, David Halberstam's is mixed: "Romantic" it may be—but highly destructive, too. ♦

## Debating the Moderators

The Scrapbook can't tell you who won the first Democratic and Republican presidential debates—truth be told, we're not convinced debates matter at all—but we can say who lost: the media. Faced with two 90-minute windows in which to showcase no less than 18 presidential contenders, the producers at MSNBC opted for the most confusing, superficial, and pretentious format possible.

First, to go along with the many candidates, there were needless multiple moderators—two for the Democrats (Brian Williams and David Stanton) and three for the Republicans (Chris Matthews, John Harris, and Jim VandeHei). Then there were the silly "Show of Hands . . ." questions, in which the moderators asked candidates to raise a hand if "you believe there is such a thing as a global war on terror" or do "not agree—believe—in evolution." But the cameras never showed clearly which candidates raised their hands and which did not.

There were the absurd time restrictions, in which candidates had to tell America how they would win—or lose, as the case may be—in Iraq and extend health care insurance to every American, whether they like it or not, in 60 seconds or less. And there were the Trivial Pursuit questions, as in Jim VandeHei's demand that Rudy Giuliani explain "the difference between a Sunni and Shia Muslim"—the complex details of which have about the same importance to U.S. foreign policy as the difference between a Methodist and a Lutheran. Giuliani answered correctly, incidentally—no doubt to the chagrin of everyone who thinks conservatives are the "stupid party." Speaking of which, maybe next time Vandehei can ask Barack Obama who coined that phrase. We won't hold our breath, however.

Alas, there were no time restrictions on the moderators, who would interrupt the candidates at the 61- or 31-second mark only to go on to ask a question in three different ways, or confront a candidate with an overly long, conventional Beltway interpretation of his or her flaws.



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*(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of May 27, 1996)*

The highpoint—or lowpoint—was when Delaware senator Joe Biden turned the tables on Brian Williams:

> WILLIAMS: Senator Biden, words have, in the past, gotten you in trouble, words that were borrowed and words that some found hateful. An editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* said, 'In addition to his uncontrolled verbosity, Biden is a gaffe machine.' Can you reassure voters in this country [as opposed to the voters in Belgium?] that you would have the discipline you would need on the world stage, Senator?
> BIDEN: Yes.

The audience laughed uproariously, and Williams could barely conceal his embarrassment. Life is full of simple pleasures. ♦

## Dana Milbank Is Confused

In a war on terror speech last week, President Bush talked about al Qaeda. In his May 3 *Washington Post* column, Dana Milbank informed his readers that Bush mentioned al Qaeda 27 times. For Milbank, who apparently counted, that was 27 times too many.

"It's time to play the Qaeda card," he observed snottily. Milbank thinks talking about al Qaeda in Iraq is a ploy by a scheming White House to change the subject away from "sectarian strife and civil war in Iraq." Interesting theory. Someone forgot to tell the president. Shortly after Bush began talking about the war on terror, he also said this: "The terrorists and extremists and radicals set off a wave of sectarian violence that engulfed that young democracy's capital. It threatened to destabilize the entire country."

Milbank also repeated the mainstream media myth that "al Qaeda had no ties to Iraq before the U.S. invasion in 2003," this time sourcing the claim to a report by the Pentagon Inspector General. Better, apparently, to cite a non-expert like the IG—a glorified auditor—when most people who might actually know something about the subject say otherwise. Like former CIA director George Tenet for one, who writes in his new book that "there was more than enough evidence to give us real concern about Iraq and al-Qa'ida." Or former Iraqi prime minister and longtime CIA asset Ayad Allawi: "I believe very strongly that Saddam had relations with al Qaeda. And these relations started in Sudan. We know Saddam had relationships with a lot of terrorists and international terrorism." Or Barham Salih, deputy prime minister of Iraq: "The alliance between the Baathists and jihadists which sustains al Qaeda in Iraq is not new, contrary to what you may have been told. I know this at first hand. Some of my friends were murdered by jihadists, by al Qaeda-affiliated operatives who had been sheltered and assisted by Saddam's regime."

And, in any case, the Pentagon IG report never claimed that "al Qaeda had no ties to Iraq" before the war.

Oops. ♦



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# Casual

## Queens English

I was being interviewed recently by a woman who had mistaken me for an expert of some kind. I am an authority on several subjects—how best to pack the family car for a road trip, for example—but an expert, sadly, on none.

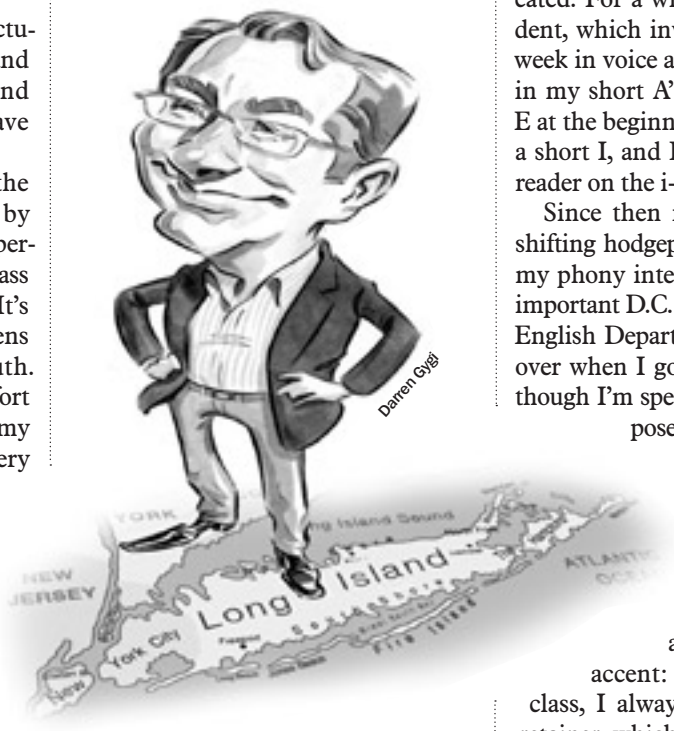
The session began with small talk, and after just a moment or two, the woman said she guessed she didn't need to ask where I was from, given my British accent.

Yeah . . . about that. I am not actually from the British Isles. The Island from which I come is Long. And we have no queen. But we do have Queens.

This has happened before. In the past I've waved off the confusion by explaining that I am a pretentious person too ashamed of my working-class roots to let my speech betray them. It's not a right response, it just happens to be more efficient than the truth. And the truth is that with great effort I have deliberately removed from my speech most, if not absolutely every trace, of Noo Yawk.

I remember as a child determining that I did not want to grow up sounding like I was from Queens. It happened in Woodhaven, a working-class section not far from Brooklyn. My family and all my cousins were spending the day at my grandmother's house. Before Woodhaven, she'd lived in upper Manhattan and had run a little candy shop, the only remains of which were several large glass jars now stuffed with packs of menthol cigarettes. It seemed we went to Nanny's almost every weekend. While the adults talked and smoked and drank enough coffee to fortify an army of night watchmen, the children would play out back or sit on the stoop. One day, two of my cousins and I went to the park to play handball.

Three or four tough guys, probably in their late teens, were stepping off the court for a break. After some begging on our part, they said we could play while they drank their beers. The image in my memory is one of bright morning sunlight, tall Budweiser cans, shirts with the sleeves cut off, cigarette smoke, and angry open mouths. And from the mouths came a foul guttural stream of curses, insults, threats, and general viciousness, all spoken in the thickest Queens accents I had ever heard. In their conversation, women were sluts or bitches, disagreement was expressed by f— you or f— that, and everyone in sight was an asshole.




My cousins and I played a couple of quick games before being told to f— off. On the way back to Nanny's, one of my cousins said, "David, you live in Queens, how come you don't talk like that?"

I am from Queens—and I'm not. When my wife overhears me tell someone I'm from Queens, she guffaws, as if to say, Yeah, maybe . . . from the Queens public library. Then she does this riff about her husband growing up on the Mean Streets of Queens, before describing my family's large suburban house and the pretty tree-lined hill on which we lived. It's one of those husband-and-wife skits that can be performed on short notice. It's funny. Really. My wife, I should mention, happens to be from a well-to-do town on Long Island whose name suggests no violence greater than that of a vigorous tennis match. But I digress.

After that day in the park, my relation to my accent grew more complicated. For a while I was a theater student, which involved several classes a week in voice and diction. The squeak in my short A's went away. The long E at the beginning of "eleven" became a short I, and I began to sound like a reader on the i-leven o'clock news.

Since then my speech has been a shifting hodgepodge of accents. I have my phony intellectual accent, my self-important D.C. accent, and some weird English Department accent that takes over when I go into writer mode and, though I'm speaking aloud, try to compose really fine sentences. I call this my voice of literature—and perhaps it was this accent that threw off my interviewer.

One thing I regret about losing my Queens accent: In voice and diction class, I always had to take out my retainer, which was keeping my teeth straight after my three years in braces. Otherwise I would whistle my T's, or in acting class make the characters I played sound like parodic homosexuals. But, taking out my retainer so often, I'd lose it, and then I'd feel awful, and my mother would yell. So, I stopped bothering with the retainer, and my teeth grew crooked again—another reason, along with the way I pronounce coffee, that I may sometimes seem British.

**David Skinner**



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the weekly Standard

# Inadvertent Truths

George Tenet's *At the Center of the Storm* is a self-serving and often whiny recollection of his time as director of central intelligence. Among other failings, the author seems to have fabricated the story that frames his discussion of the Iraq war, an impossible meeting with Richard Perle at the White House on September 12, 2001—impossible because Perle was in France on that date and remained there for three days. The context he provides for his famous "slam dunk" comment makes it arguably more damaging to his reputation rather than less. And yes, it's a bit rich to read the former CIA director's complaints about unfair leaks when a small group of unelected bureaucrats from his agency, including some close to Tenet, leaked almost daily against the White House. Clearly, President Bush made a mistake by retaining Tenet, a Clinton appointee, in the job for the better part of his first term.

Despite all of this, the book provides surprising evidence—some of it new—that Bush was right to take the war on terror to Iraq, and that he might be well advised to get more serious about Iran. Tenet offers this evidence inadvertently, for it undercuts the fashionable critique of the Iraq war that he now seeks to associate himself with. But precisely because the evidence cuts against Tenet's polemical thrust, it should be given considerable weight.

For instance, Tenet devotes several pages to a reexamination of the ties between Iraq and al Qaeda. And though he tries to stake out politically safe middle ground—by arguing against imaginary Bush administration officials who claimed Iraq was behind 9/11—he concludes that Iraq *did* have a relationship with al Qaeda that the Bush administration was right to be worried about:

> The intelligence told us that senior al-Qa'ida leaders and the Iraqis had discussed safe haven in Iraq. Most of the public discussion thus far has focused on Zarqawi's arrival in Baghdad under an assumed name in May of 2002, allegedly to receive medical treatment. Zarqawi, whom we termed a 'senior associate and collaborator' of al-Qa'ida at the time, supervised camps in northern Iraq run by Ansar al-Islam (AI).
>
> We believed that up to two hundred al-Qa'ida fighters began to relocate there in camps after the Afghan campaign began in the fall of 2001. The camps enhanced Zarqawi's reach beyond the Middle East. One of the camps run by AI, known as Kurmal, engaged in production and training in the use of low-level poisons such as cyanide. We had intelligence telling us that Zarqawi's men had tested these poisons on animals and, in at least one case, on one of their own associates. They laughed about how well it worked. Our efforts to track activities emanating from Kurmal resulted in the arrest of nearly one hundred Zarqawi operatives in Western Europe planning to use poisons in operations.
>
> What was even more worrisome was that by the spring and summer of 2002, more than a dozen al-Qa'ida-affiliated extremists converged on Baghdad, with apparently no harassment on the part of the Iraqi government. They had found a comfortable and secure environment in which they moved people and supplies to support Zarqawi's operations in northeastern Iraq.

Other high-level al Qaeda terrorists also set up shop in Baghdad:

> Thirwat Shihata and Yussef Dardiri, two Egyptians assessed by a senior al-Qa'ida detainee to be among the Egyptian Islamic Jihad's best operational planners, . . . arrived by mid-May of 2002. At times we lost track of them, though their associates continued to operate in Baghdad as of October 2002. Their activity in sending recruits to train in Zarqawi's camps was compelling enough.
>
> There was also concern that these two might be planning operations outside Iraq. Credible information told us that Shihata was willing to strike U.S., Israeli, and Egyptian targets sometime in the future. Shihata had been linked to terrorist operations in North Africa, and while in Afghanistan he had trained North Africans in the use of truck bombs. Smoke indeed. But how much fire, if any?

Tenet also confirms an internal intelligence community dispute, reported in this magazine 18 months ago, over the debriefings of senior al Qaeda terrorist Ibn Shaykh al Libi. The story of al Libi's disputed claims provides an illuminating look at how Michigan senator Carl Levin has dishonestly (and dishonorably) driven mainstream news reporting on the issue of prewar Iraq intelligence.

In November 2005, Levin managed to have declassified excerpts of a Defense Intelligence Agency report from February 2002, in which an analyst suggested that al Libi was misleading his interrogators when he told them the Iraqi regime had provided support and training to al Qaeda on weapons of mass destruction. For Levin, and the reporters he hoodwinked, this report was further proof that the Bush administration had exaggerated the intelligence on



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Iraq and al Qaeda. A breathless *New York Times* article claimed that an al Qaeda official had been "identified as a likely fabricator months before the Bush administration began to use his statements as the foundation for its claims that Iraq trained al Qaeda members to use biological and chemical weapons." The *Times* faulted Bush, Cheney, and Colin Powell for using information from al Libi in public debates.

But there was a simple reason the Bush officials continued to use al Libi's claims: Senior CIA officials believed al Libi's highly detailed confessions were true, and that his recantation was false. Indeed, Tenet himself testified to Congress a full year after the DIA report that Iraq "has provided training in poisons and gases to two al Qaeda associates."

The DIA report Levin had declassified was hardly the whole story. As Tenet reports in his book, "there was sharp division on [al Libi's] recantation" inside the CIA. And many al Qaeda detainees who provided information on al Qaeda's pursuit of WMD later recanted their original stories. Al Libi "clearly lied," Tenet says, but we don't know when. Either his initial confession or his later denial could be accurate. Tenet concludes: "The fact is, we don't know which story is true, and since we don't know, we can assume nothing." In sum, it is still possible—some CIA officials believe likely—that al Qaeda received WMD training and support from Iraq.

Tenet also discloses new intelligence about the activities of the al Qaeda leadership living under what he calls "loose house arrest" in Iran:

> From the end of 2002 to the spring of 2003, we received a stream of reliable reporting that the senior al-Qa'ida leadership in Saudi Arabia was negotiating for the purchase of three Russian nuclear devices. Saudi al-Qa'ida chief Abu Bakr related the offer directly to the al-Qa'ida leadership in Iran, where Sayf al-Adl and Abdel al-Aziz al-Masri (described as al-Qa'ida's "nuclear chief" by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed) were reportedly being held under a loose form of house arrest by the Iranian regime. The al-Qa'ida leadership had obviously learned much from their ventures into the nuclear market in the early 1990s. Sayf al-Adl told Abu Bakr that no price was too high to pay if they could get their hands on such weapons. However, he cautioned Abu Bakr that al-Qa'ida had been stung by scams in the past and that Pakistani specialists should be brought to Saudi Arabia to inspect the merchandise prior to purchase.

Sayf al Adl, who helped plan the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa, has also reportedly ordered attacks around the globe from his house arrest/safe haven in Iran. As Weekly Standard contributor Thomas Joscelyn asked earlier this week: How meaningful is this "detention" if al Qaeda leaders are plotting attacks and openly discussing the acquisition of nuclear weapons from Iranian soil?

In another section of the book, Tenet defends Dick Cheney against the ridiculous claim made in Ron Suskind's book, *The One Percent Doctrine*, that Cheney urged his colleagues to ignore evidence that did not serve his warmongering purposes.

Tenet says Cheney asked a CIA analyst named "Kevin K." if Langley thought al Qaeda had already acquired a nuke. Kevin responded, "Sir, if I were to give you a traditional analytical assessment of the al-Qa'ida nuclear program, I would say they probably do not. But I can't assure you they don't."

Cheney, according to Tenet, "then made a comment that in my view has since been misinterpreted." Tenet's Cheney replies to Kevin: "If there's a one percent chance they do, you have to pursue it as if it were true." Tenet does not interpret this comment the same way Suskind does:

> I am convinced the vice president did not mean to suggest, as some have asserted, that we should ignore contrary evidence and that such a policy should be applied to all threats to our national security. On the contrary, the vice president understood instinctively that WMD must be managed differently because the implications were unique—such an attack would change history. We all felt the vice president understood this issue. There was no question in my mind that he was absolutely right to insist that when it came to discussing weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists, conventional risk assessments no longer applied; we must rule out any possibility of terrorists succeeding in their quest to obtain such weapons. We could not afford to be surprised.

So there were significant and dangerous al Qaeda-Iraq ties. There were and are al Qaeda-Iran ties. Saddam's WMD programs remained a threat. George Tenet may not have intended to tell these truths. But he has.

Oh, and one more thing (highlighted last week by *National Review*'s Rich Lowry): Tenet had this to say about the CIA view of Saddam Hussein's nuclear ambitions:

> [The CIA] assessed that Saddam did not have a nuclear weapon and that if he had to make his own fissile material, he probably would not be able to do so until 2007 to 2009. However, we indicated in the NIE that we had only moderate confidence in that judgment. We also indicated that [the Bureau of Intelligence and Research] thought that, although Saddam clearly wanted nuclear weapons, there was inadequate evidence to prove that he had an ongoing integrated and comprehensive program to develop them.
>
> If Saddam could obtain fissile material elsewhere, it would not be hard for the regime to make a weapon within a year. After all, we believed that some terrorist groups could do so if they came into possession of the all-important highly enriched uranium or plutonium.

It's 2007. Fortunately, Saddam is gone.

—*William Kristol*



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# But Is It Good for the Conservatives?

## Darwinism and its discontents.

**BY ANDREW FERGUSON**

They only had two and a half hours to settle some knotty questions—*Does reality have an ultimate, metaphysical foundation? Is there content to the universe?*—so they had to talk fast. But not fast enough. By the time the formidable panel discussion was over last week, I, as a member of the audience, had even more questions about the nature of reality than usual.

This hardly ever happens at a think tank, even Washington's most audacious and interesting think tank, the American Enterprise Institute. One reason AEI stands as the capital's premier research organization is that it alone would think to assemble a quartet of intelligent and accomplished people to debate the implications of Darwinism for political thought and public policy. Specifically, the panel's title was "Darwinism and Conservatism: Friends or Foes?" Its moderator was Steven Hayward, the biographer of Ronald Reagan, and in the quartet he conducted were Larry Arnhart, a political scientist from Northern Illinois University; John Derbyshire, an author and a blogger for *National Review Online*; John West, a political scientist formerly of Seattle Pacific University and now of the Discovery Institute; and his colleague at Discovery, George Gilder, the legendary author of *Wealth and Poverty*, *Microcosm*, *The Spirit of Enterprise*, and *Life After Television*. (Gilder is routinely and correctly called a visionary, partly because he's the only man on earth who can imagine life without television.)

*Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

In the yin-yang, either-or, whose-side-are-you-on language that we Washingtonians prefer, you could say that Arnhart and Derbyshire are pro-Darwinians—defenders of Darwin's theory of the origin of species and relatively satisfied that it explains most of the things that need explaining. Gilder and West are anti-Darwinians, who work hard to point out the theory's limitations, both scientific and philosophical. And all four of them, to one extent or another, are men of the right. Note, though, that the subject of their panel wasn't the primary question of whether Darwinian theory is true; it was the secondary question of whether Darwinian theory and political conservatism abet each other as ways of understanding and shaping the world: "Does Darwin's theory help defend or undermine traditional morality and family life? Does it encourage or discredit economic freedom?"

In his remarks, Derbyshire objected that such questions, which were after all the point of the panel he had traveled to Washington to be on, were nonetheless pointless. "Conservatism and Darwinism are orthogonal," he said. "Neither one implies the other."

That sort of party-poopery could easily have ended the discussion right there—except that, as Hayward said, the commingling of Darwinism with political theory and practice has a long and unavoidable history. The relationship has waxed and waned. Most obviously and infamously, Darwinism spawned Social Darwinism, or so Social Darwinists claimed. Its pitiless principle of survival of the fittest was, Hayward pointed out, invoked by the Confederacy's most articulate theorist, Alexander Stephens, and also by the champions of unregulated capitalism in robber baron America. Throughout the late 19th century, Social Darwinists assumed that Darwin's theory had disproved the liberal (in the old sense) tradition of natural rights and natural law that inspired the Founding Fathers. John Dewey argued for Darwin's relevance to social and political arrangements, and so did most of his fellow Progressives: Woodrow Wilson, for instance, who said that "living constitutions must be Darwinian in structure and in practice." Traces of Social Darwinism can be


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found too in Hitler and Stalin, both of whom were even worse than Woodrow Wilson.

In light of such unhappy history, Hayward said, "I sometimes wish there could be a separation of science and state to go along with a separation of religion and state."

It's a nice idea, but it too might have ended the discussion right then and there, except that Darwinism is once again being used by partisans of a particular political philosophy. This time the lucky philosophy is contemporary American conservatism, and the foremost proponent of the conservative-Darwinian dalliance is Arnhart. He offered a quick summary of his position, which has become popular among right-wingers of a libertarian stripe and has found its fullest expression in Arnhart's book *Darwinian Conservatism*.

"Conservatives *need* Darwin," he said. Without the scientific evidence Darwinian theory offers, conservative views would be swamped by liberal sentimentality. The left-wing view of human nature as unfixed and endlessly manipulable has led to countless disastrous Utopian schemes. Hard-headed Darwinians, on the other hand, see human nature as settled and enduring and stubbornly unchangeable, and conservatives can wield the findings of Darwin to rebut the scheming, ambitious busybodies of the left and their subversion of custom and tradition. (I'm paraphrasing, by the way.)

Darwinism, he said, supports the conservative view of sexual differences and family life. Left-wingers see these things as social constructions, mere conventions that can be overridden in the quest for personal liberation; Darwin anchors them in nature. Darwinism supports the conservative view of private property and the marketplace, because our innermost desires, shaped by natural selection over thousands of years, include an unstoppable need to own property and to find gratification in trading our property with others. And Darwinism supports the view of limited, decentralized government, since the selfish human nature revealed by Darwin requires that no single authority be trusted with unchecked power.

West, the anti-Darwinian, began his rebuttal by pointing out that many leftists have criticized Darwin, too, so no one should think that anti-Darwinism is exclusively an obsession of religious primitives on the right. Kurt Vonnegut, oddly enough, spoke against Darwinian evolution, so anti-Darwinism is an obsession of overrated novelists on the left as well. West's most important point, though, is that Darwinism is an intellectual package deal. Accepting its larger scientific claims about the origins of life, and about how human nature came to be the way it is, requires acceptance of its much less appealing philosophical suppositions: that the universe is a random, directionless process, that human existence has no point or purpose, that free will and the sanctity of the self are ultimately illusions.

The amorality built into Darwinism, West said, explains why it has so easily been employed by eugenicists of both left and right. Reduced to the material processes of chemistry and physics, life as it is, even human life, no longer seems terribly worthy of respect. "Why not use reason to direct evolution to produce a new kind of human being?" West asked, in devil's advocate mode. "What's so sacrosanct about existing human dispositions and capacities, since they were all produced by such a purposeless process?"

As anti-Darwinians like to do, West has combed the vast corpus of Darwin's writings to find the creepiest possible examples of the great man's cold-bloodedness. Darwin himself apparently didn't believe that scientific questions of natural selection and political questions of human social arrangements were wholly unrelated. In pointing out how vaccinations had saved thousands of otherwise infirm people from death, he wrote:

> No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man. It is surprising how soon a want of care, or care wrongly directed, leads to the degeneration of a domestic race; but excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed.

So Darwinism, viewed one way, can easily be considered morally disastrous. But, responded pro-Darwin Derbyshire, *Is it true?* "The truth value of Darwinism is essential," he said. "The truth value always comes first." *If* Darwinism is true—and its undeniable success in explaining the world suggests that it is—and *if* Darwinism undermines conservatism, as West had claimed, "then so much the worse for conservatism."

It was left to Gilder to provide a way out of this dilemma, if it is a dilemma. He noted that extremely complex explanations of physical processes can be thoroughly accurate, yet still incomplete—or even beside the point. Consider the microchip, he said. Like the human mind, it is often "presented as a thinking machine."

"But," he said, "you can know the location of every molecule and atom in a microprocessor, you can know their movements and how each gate within it is flipping, without having any idea at all of the function the computer is undertaking." You can explain all these things, in other words, without explaining the most important thing: What's it doing—and why?

Thus Gilder offered a concession by way of a compromise: "Darwinism may be true," he said, "but it's ultimately trivial." It is not a "fundamental explanation for creation or the universe." Evolution and natural selection may explain why organic life presents to us its marvelous exfoliation. Yet Darwinism leaves untouched the crucial mysteries—who we are, why we are here, how we are to behave toward one another, and how we should fix the alternative minimum tax. And these are questions, except the last one, that lie beyond the expertise of any panel at any think tank, even AEI. ♦


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# Racism in the Islamic World

## How can peace prevail in the Middle East in the face of Islamic bigotry and hate? When will moderate Muslims speak out?

For years, the U.N., led by Islamic and Arab nations and their sympathizers, has accused Israel of racism, but the world consistently turns a blind eye to open, seething anti-Semitism in Islamic society.

### What are the facts?

**In one of the most astonishing propaganda coups ever,** a United Nations conference on racism, which took place in Durban South Africa in 2001, declared that Zionism is racism. No wonder the U.S. and Israel walked out of the meeting, which was dominated by representatives of Islamic and Arab states and other anti-Israel forces, and whose conclusions were predictable from the outset.

The supreme irony of this conference was that it accused no other nation of racism—only Israel. In truth, Israel is perhaps the most racially and ethnically diverse and tolerant country in the world. More than half of Israel's Jewish population consists of people of color—blacks from Ethiopia and Yemen, as well as brown-skinned people from Morocco, Iran, Syria, Egypt and Israel itself. In addition, Israel's population includes more than one million Arabs, who enjoy the same civil rights as Jewish Israelis. In Israel hate speech is banned, and it is against the law to discriminate based on race or religion.

> "Until Muslims reject racism in all forms, they can't expect Islam to enjoy full respect as a political and spiritual force."

In contrast, anti-Semitism—a poisonous form of racism directed specifically against the Jewish people—is rampant in most all Islamic societies. Not only is anti-Semitism commonplace in Muslim nations, but it is propagated shamelessly by their leaders, in state-sponsored media, and by Muslim clergy.

For example, former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed declared in a 2003 speech to the Organization of Islamic Conference that, "today Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them." Imagine if an American president had made a similarly sweeping and bigoted statement about blacks, Latinos or any other race—what a justifiable uproar, perhaps even an impeachment, would ensue. Yet there was no condemnation by the Muslim world of Mr. Mohamed's comments. Rather, virtually all of the conference's Muslim leaders actually voiced their approval.

In response to a terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia in May 2004, Crown Prince Abdullah declared that "Zionism is behind [these] terrorist actions in the kingdom." (Zionism is the code word often used by Islamic anti-Semites for Jews.) U.S. Congressman Tom Lantos called the Prince's assertion "an outrage . . . blatant hypocrisy," but Islamic leaders were silent. In fact, millions of Muslims still insist that Zionists were behind the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.

**Anti-Semitism is expressed so freely and ubiquitously** in most Islamic societies that no citizen can escape it. During Ramadan in 2002, Egypt's state-controlled TV aired "Horseman Without a Horse," a program based on the notorious forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, in which Jews allegedly use the blood of non-Jews to make Passover matzot. In Iran, a TV series, "Zahra's Blue Eyes," portrays "Zionists" kidnapping Palestinian children and harvesting their organs.

Perhaps nowhere is the hatred of Jews more virulent than among the Palestinians. Most perniciously, Palestinian children are taught in school that Jews are descended from apes and pigs and that the most noble thing they can do is to kill Jews. Muslim clerics like Imam Ibrahim Madiras, an employee of the Palestinian Authority, declared in a 2005 television sermon, "Jews are a cancer" and later that, "Muslims will kill the Jews . . . [and] rejoice in Allah's victory." No surprise, then, that the 1982 doctoral dissertation of Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas makes the astounding claim that "Zionists" collaborated with the Nazis to annihilate the Jewish people in order to drive the survivors to Palestine.

**Anti-Semitism and the prospects for peace:** Islamic anti-Semitism permeates the Arab Middle East and creates an atmosphere in which Jews are reviled and represented as subhuman. How can the Palestinian people embrace peace with a people represented by their religious and political leaders as dehumanized, evil beings? Even more importantly, how can Israel be expected to trust a so-called peace partner who expresses abject hatred and murderous intent toward Jews on a daily basis? Yet the U.S. and many European nations continue to demand that Israel make one-sided sacrifices for peace with a people steeped in racism and committed to its destruction.

Until Islamic leaders muster the integrity to relentlessly condemn anti-Semitism (and its evil twin, anti-Zionism), we can't expect Israel to accept a forced peace with the Palestinians. Likewise, until moderate Muslims reject racism in all forms, they can't expect Islam to enjoy full respect as a political and spiritual force among the world's people.

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# The Balkan Front

## The Wahhabis are up to no good in southern Europe. BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Shpetim Mahmudi

*The Wahhabi-occupied building (right) and destroyed trees at Harabati Tekke in Tetovo*

*Tirana*

Taking the temperature of Islam in the Balkans this spring is only partly reassuring. In Sarajevo in late March, observances for the 800th anniversary of the birth of the great Sufi poet Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi (who is hugely popular, incidentally, with American readers) were entirely in keeping with the moderate, peaceful character of the Islam of the region. Yet at the same time, a visitor to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia encountered unmistakable evidence that extremist intruders are opening a Balkan front in the global jihad.

The celebration in Sarajevo—to which we will return—marked what UNESCO is calling the "Year of Rumi." It was only one of several commemorative events taking place around the world. Rumi's work, written in Farsi, has been translated into every major language; a Google search turns up four million references to him.

Born in Afghanistan, Rumi moved west to Asia Minor, where he died in 1273. The area had been part of the eastern Roman Empire until two centuries before, and the name "Rumi" is a descriptive meaning "the Roman"—in effect, "the European." Rumi's tomb, in Konya, Turkey, is the object of innumerable pilgrimages, at least among Muslims not opposed to the honoring of graves. One Muslim country where Rumi is unlikely to be publicly feted is Saudi Arabia, whose official fundamentalist Wahhabi sect, the inspiration for al Qaeda, opposes the honoring or even the marking of graves, and generally forces Sufism underground. In neighboring Iraq, by contrast, Sufism flourishes openly, even in the face of Wahhabi attacks, and Rumi's work is read in both Arabic and Farsi.

Rumi is an apostle of love, and his faith exemplifies the tradition of Muslim moderation that is singled out for praise in a new study by the Rand Corporation, *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*. The Rand report proposes a global alliance between the democracies and moderate Islam comparable to the Cold War era campaign by Western governments, supporting anti-Communist liberals and social democrats, to contain and ultimately undermine Soviet rule. The moderate Muslims, from the Balkans through Central Asia and India to Southeast Asia, could "encircle" and challenge the radical Islam of the core Arab countries. Balkan Muslim cultures in particular are among those most saturated with Sufism, and are singled out in the Rand report as a potential base for partnership with the democratic powers in the strengthening of moderate Islam.

Yet even in the Balkans, all is not peace and poetry. The ominous presence of Wahhabi missionaries, financiers, terror recruiters, and other mischief-makers bespeaks a fresh offensive in that tormented land. From the new Wahhabi seminary in the lovely Bosnian city of Zenica, to the cobblestone streets of Sarajevo's old Ottoman center, to the Muslim-majority villages in southern Serbia, extremist Sunni men in their distinctive, untrimmed beards and short, Arab style breeches (worn in imaginary emulation of Muhammad), accompanied by women in face veils and full body coverings (a bizarre novelty in the contemporary Balkans), are again appearing, funded by reactionary Saudis and Pakistanis. They aim to widen the horizon of global jihad—witness the revived campaign of terrorism in Morocco and Algeria. In the Balkans, their targets are both Sufis and traditional Muslims.

Within Albania itself, Wahhabi activism remains minimal, concentrated on individual outreach (*dawa*) in mosques and backed up by fundamentalist literature flooding into the country. In Kosovo, although Saudi Arabia maintains a relief office in the capital, Prishtina, Wahhabis keep an even lower profile, since most Kosovar Albanians are outspoken in their support for the

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United States and hostile to any indication of Islamist designs. But elswhere, trouble is afoot.

In neighboring Montenegro and districts of southern Serbia, the Wahhabi presence is open and even violent. Wahhabis have disrupted religious services, yelling abuse at imams for not following their practices, and have precipitated gunfire between ordinary people as well as fatal confrontations with local police. Most recently, on April 20, a Wahhabi was killed in a clash with police in the southern Serbian town of Novi Pazar. In Bosnia, on April 27, a cache of automatic weapons, rocket-propelled grenades, bombs, ammunition, and related material was seized in the remote northwestern village of Upper Barska. The owner of the house where the weapons were discovered, 47-year-old Ahmet Mustafic, was described as a Wahhabi by people in the village and in the Bosnian media. The location has been a Wahhabi hot spot for some time.

In the clash between Wahhabism and moderate Islam in the Balkans, the most prominent battleground at present is the poor but bustling city of Tetovo, in western Macedonia. Many local people are followers of the Bektashi Sufis, a gnostic order named for Hajji Bektash Veli (1209-1271), a Turkish-language poet and friend—some say rival—of Rumi. The Bektashis, like the Shias and the Turkish and Kurdish Alevis, revere Imam Ali. They are without doubt the most active and influential Sufi movement in the Balkans, but they are despised by Wahhabis, for several reasons.

First, they represent a liberal trend among the Shias, and Wahhabis loathe Shias even more than they hate Jews and Christians. Second, the Bektashis consume alcohol. And third, men and women are equals in Bektashi rituals. Several Bektashi *babas*, as their teachers are known, have insisted to me that they are the "most progressive" element in global Islam, and they back that statement up with a long, proven, and fervent commitment to secular governance and popular education.

Wahhabis and Bektashis are presently locked in an armed standoff at the Bektashi complex known as the Harabati Tekke, in Tetovo. This large enclave of varied structures, many of them dating from the 18th century, is famous throughout the region, and appears on Tetovo's municipal shield. Under Titoite communism, it was nationalized and turned into a hotel and entertainment complex. Since the fall of the Communist regime, the government has failed to settle the matter of ownership. In 2002, however, in the aftermath of Slav-Albanian ethnic fighting, a group of Wahhabis including Arabs, equipped with automatic weapons, seized a major building inside the Harabati complex, formerly used for Sufi meditation.

I visited the Harabati Tekke in March for the Central Asian pre-Islamic holiday of Nevruz, a springtime observance that is favored by Sufis. Because the Bektashis have no friends in the Macedonian government who might rescue them from their tormenters, the Wahhabis, whose Kalashnikovs are never far out of sight, have proceeded to occupy more structures in the Harabati Tekke. Bektashis do not perform the normal daily prayers prescribed for Muslims, but the Wahhabis do, and they have taken over a guest house and dubbed it a mosque, broadcasting a tape of the call to prayer in a thick and indistinct voice. They have also seized a central building with glass windows and covered the panes with black paper, on the pretext that women praying inside do not want to be observed. And they have cut down some ancient trees, to the Sufis' disgust.

Thus, the Albanian lands are witnessing three of the tactics commonly employed by Saudi-financed radicals seeking to export bloody terror. In Kosovo, they mainly burrow deep undercover, like moles. Where they can, as in Albania, they preach and recruit; thus, the stunning Ethem Bey mosque in the capital, Tirana, purely a cultural monument until recently, is


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now the scene of Wahhabi missionizing. And where government is indifferent and the extremists' chosen enemies appear vulnerable, as in Macedonia, they invade, occupy, and threaten.

In long discussions with the Bektashis in Tetovo, I was repeatedly assured of their willingness to assist the United States and other democratic nations in rooting out Islamist radicalism in any way they can, from providing intelligence to encouraging greater Albanian involvement in Iraq, where 120 elite noncombat Albanian troops are serving with Coalition forces.

"We want to help, but we need help," said an authoritative Bektashi figure as he sketched out for me the network of extremist agitation in the region—from revived centers of Sunni radicalism in Turkey to cells hidden unobtrusively in places like Peshkopia, a small, ancient town near glacial lakes in the wild mountains of eastern Albania, to Tetovo, where the Bektashis daily watch their historic institution fall under the control of fanatics bent on their destruction. Although the Bektashis have many humble supporters, few are prepared to disrupt their own lives by taking on the Wahhabis. Thus the export of the Saudi-financed jihad continues unhampered.

Yet the Bektashis are not friendless. Among those willing to assist them, interestingly, are the communities of Turkish and Kurdish Alevi Muslims living in Germany and other Western European countries. Inspired by the legacy of Hajji Bektash and committed to secularism, women's equality, and popular schooling, the 600,000 German Alevis are a bulwark against Islamist radicalism in their country of adoption or, in many cases, of their birth.

Some young Alevis I interviewed in Cologne said they would gladly go to Macedonia to clean out the Wahhabis if encouraged to do so. But all over Europe, moderate Muslims expect their governments to act. They seem destined to be disappointed. European states are frozen in a posture of accommodation, willful oblivion, ignorance, and simple denial of the reality: The enemy will not be beaten so long as he finds places to rekindle his jihad.

Arriving in Sarajevo for Rumi's eighth centennial, I found a city reminiscent of Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War—suffering under a "horrible atmosphere produced by fear, suspicion, hatred," as Orwell wrote. Saudi Wahhabis played only a minor role in the Bosnian war of 1992-95, but they attempted to use the aftermath of that combat, which left Bosnia prostrate, to turn the local Muslims, with their Sufi traditions and life-affirming mentality, into dour fundamentalists. After the atrocities of September 11, 2001, the Wahhabis seemed on the surface to have failed. But their strategy is different in Sarajevo from those they have adopted in Tetovo and Tirana.

The Bosnian capital is more European, more cosmopolitan, more modern—and there the checkbook works better than heated rhetoric or direct confrontation. Prominent Muslim moderates are now hesitant to speak out or to associate themselves, as they previously did, with condemnation of Wahhabism—even though physical clashes in Bosnia and Serbia have fed resentment of the Wahhabis in village mosques. Rumors abound that Wahhabis are successfully penetrating Bosnia's main Islamic institutions. They are publicly talking about setting up their own parallel religious administration.

The commemoration of Rumi was held on March 30 at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, a lovely 19th-century building on a high hill in Sarajevo. The Bosnian scholar Resid Hafizovic, one of the world's great authorities on Sufism and a pronounced enemy of the Wahhabis, said Rumi "calls for friendship, collaboration, peace, and fraternal relations between people, invoking love towards all human beings as the supreme Divine creation, regardless of the religious, cultural, civilizational, or spiritual garments in which each of us mundane beings is clad. As a result, when Rumi died, his funeral was attended by mourners of many faiths: Muslims, but also Christians, Jews, Hindus, and others. His words convey this inclusiveness." Hafizovic went on to quote Rumi:

*Whoever you may be, come*
*Even though you may be*
*An unbeliever, a pagan or a fire-worshipper, come*
*Our brotherhood is not one of despair*
*Even though you may have broken*
*Your vows of repentance a hundred times, come.*

The lecture hall was overflowing during Professor Hafizovic's presentation, with no Wahhabi beards, outfits, or censorious comments discernible. The program included poems of Rumi set to the guitar, a style of religious performance that is popular in the Balkans—and loathed by Wahhabis, who object to singing set to anything other than a primitive drum, even when its content is religious. A novel aspect of the event was the participation of a delegation of three Arabs—a teacher and two imams—from a Sufi school in Israel. These Israeli citizens offered the Bosnians a fresh view of the Middle East.

Perhaps the most surprising message brought by the delegation from the Al Qasemi Academy in Baqa al Garbya, Israel, was their description of the *sharia* courts maintained by the state of Israel for resolution of disputes among Muslims. *Sharia* courts are scarce in the Balkans, and the explanation that Israel recognizes religious courts for Jews and Muslims (and, if they desire them, Christians) alongside the civil judicial apparatus, with the right of anybody to opt in or out of the alternative systems, was provocative for Bosnian Muslims.

By welcoming their Israeli Arab brethren, the Bosnians—who endured a terrible war in the 1990s, but faithfully hewed to a Sufi vision of Islam—demonstrated that dedication to the spirit of Rumi is a living and positive element in Muslim culture. Rumi is thus more important for Muslims themselves than for casual Western readers looking for a few pages of easy enlightenment. Rumi "the European" could be emblematic of a reborn, cooperative mentality in relations between Islam and the West.

In such an encounter, the approach to moderate Islam embodied in the recent Rand report appears justified in the strategic defense of the democracies. But in the streets of Balkan towns,


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the terrorist enemy is once again present, and while commemorations of Sufi poets may invigorate an alternative to extremism, they will not suffice to defeat it. We will need serious help from moderate Muslims, in the Balkans and elsewhere, and they will again need help from us. ♦

# Dissidents Unite!

## Natan Sharansky's Prague conference.

**BY SONNY BUNCH**

Natan Sharansky first came to the world's attention as a renowned Soviet dissident. The day he was released from prison in 1986, he was put on a plane to East Berlin; then he emigrated to Israel, where he entered politics and spent a tumultuous decade in the Knesset. Now, he has left government and returned to his roots as an agitator for freedom and human rights around the globe. But that's not all. He once beat the great Garry Kasparov at chess, and his book *The Case for Democracy* was distributed throughout George W. Bush's White House. It is often described as the blueprint for Bush's second Inaugural Address and the inspiration for the Bush Doctrine.

Both Sharansky's book and Bush's speech presented the spread of democracy as a trump for the terrorist threat bedeviling the West. For a while, world events cooperated: The Orange Revolution brought a democratic government to power in Ukraine, Syria pulled back from Lebanon after an international outcry over the assassination of Rafik Hariri, and Egypt released dissidents when the United States threatened to cut off aid to Hosni Mubarak's authoritarian government.

But the more recent past has been far less kind to the Sharansky/Bush ideal. The election of Hamas in the Palestinian Authority, the continued sectarian conflict in Iraq, and recent crackdowns on democratic activists and private journalists by Russian president Vladimir Putin demonstrate once again how hard it is to plant democracy in hostile soil.

Some have taken these developments as proof that Sharansky's theories were flawed. Those critics misunderstood his argument, Sharansky says. They reduced democratization to the mere holding of elections. Delivering the inaugural Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom lecture at the Heritage Foundation last year, Sharansky stressed that "democracy is free elections and free societies." He continued, "The test of the democratic state is not elections; there are elections in every dictatorship. . . . The test of democratic states is the town square test, where you can go to this square to express your views and you will not be punished for it."

Natan Sharansky

Illustration by Drew Friedman

The Soviet Union naturally failed this test, and Sharansky spent nine years in the gulag. During that time, he dreamed of engaging democratic leaders one on one in order to make them understand what repression meant to actual citizens. "It seemed that if only the voice of the dissidents were heard, and more discussion was possible, we could change the world," Sharansky told me last week.

Next month, Sharansky will give the current crop of dissidents a megaphone through which to air their grievances and aspirations and rally international support: Along with Velvet Revolutionary and former president of the Czech Republic Václav Havel and former prime minister of Spain José María Aznar, Sharansky is cohosting a Conference on Democracy and Security. To be held in Prague from June 4-6, the summit will be attended by President Bush, en route to Germany for the G-8 Summit.

The conference will seek to strengthen the democratic movement by bringing together political leaders and people working to create freer societies all over the world. It's Sharansky's prison vision realized: Those in attendance will include opposition figures from "Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Iran, Cuba and North Korea, Belarus and Russia," Sharansky says. "It's like a representation of the dream of my dissident youth . . . in the former Soviet Union and we were very upset with the policy of appeasement"—détente, as it was called in America—"and we wanted to debate with [Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger], to challenge them publicly."

Of course, Sharansky will find little to challenge in the policies of George W. Bush (though the realist machinations of some in the State Department, such as their effort to spike $100 million in aid for opposition groups in Iran, are less to his liking). As one White House official told me, the conference "is an opportunity for the president to meet again with dis-

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sidents and discuss ways that democratic governments can help support their advocacy for democracy."

The gathering is being organized less for Bush's benefit than for that of other government officials, both at home and abroad. "The belief in the power of democracy to change the world is still a dissident idea, even among the politicians of the free world," Sharansky says. Voices from outside politics can inject vital real-life experience into the debate: "There can be no better nonpartisan defenders of this ideal than dissidents."

When people point to the democratic shortcomings of the Middle East, Sharansky grows visibly agitated. "Often there is this question, 'Where are the more moderate Muslims?'" he told me. "They'll be in Prague. Come see them, talk to them, touch them, the moderate Muslims."

He points to Iran as a society that, like the Soviet Union before it, is rotting from the inside—a termite-infested house just waiting to collapse. He calls Iran "almost a classic example of how in one generation a country of true believers could turn into a country of doublethinkers," a term (borrowed from *1984*) for those who no longer believe in the ideals of a totalitarian regime but are afraid to voice their disagreement. The opposition to the mullahs' revolution, he says, is "so massive that it could be compared with Solidarity in Poland."

Now, then, is the time for the trade unions and student organizations and journalists of the free world to get involved, Sharansky says. It's just that kind of solidarity that he hopes to stimulate with the conference in Prague. ♦

# Ignoring Nigeria

## The election that wasn't and other disturbing portents. BY DAVID ADESNIK

Only four countries export more oil to the United States than Nigeria. Each day, Nigeria produces the same amount of oil, give or take a few barrels, as Kuwait or the United Arab Emirates. If oil prices hold steady at their current level, Nigeria will continue to earn more than $50 billion a year from oil exports.

Oil is Nigeria's curse. It generates enough wealth to provoke lasting and violent conflicts, but not enough to raise the nation out of poverty and misrule. And now, once again, Nigeria is on the brink of political chaos.

Almost nine years ago, a sudden heart attack liberated Nigeria from the brutal dictatorship of Gen. Sani Abacha. Two Saturdays ago, pervasive fraud and brazen violence ruined an election that had had the potential to make history. If all had gone well on April 21, Nigerian voters might have witnessed the first transfer of power from one elected civilian president to another. Instead, no one knows who the next president will be.

Although Nigerian democracy has always been a rather corrupt and violent affair, it may now be replaced by something far worse. And this failure has everything to do with oil.

### The Election

The name of the winner is Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. Nigerians themselves know little about Yar'Adua, an obscure provincial governor from northern Nigeria, home to most of the country's 70 million Muslims. Last December, President Olusegun Obasanjo used both bribery and intimidation to ensure Yar'Adua's nomination as the candidate of the ruling People's Democratic party. Obasanjo resorted to this approach only after a previous round of bribery and intimidation failed to result in a constitutional amendment that would have allowed Obasanjo to run for a third term of office.

Yar'Adua prevailed with 24.6 million votes, about 70 percent of the total. The former dictator Gen. Muhammadu Buhari came in second with 6.6 million votes, about 18 percent of the total. Outgoing vice president Atiku Abubakar placed third, with 2.6 million votes. Both Buhari and Abubakar quickly declared the result invalid.

Even before the results were announced, observers dismissed the election as a failure. A delegation of 150 from the European Union said the election had "fallen far short of basic international and regional standards." Two American delegations, including one headed up by Madeleine Albright, arrived at the same conclusion.

Yar'Adua's inauguration is scheduled for May 29, giving the opposition only a short time to block his ascension to the presidency. Gen. Buhari's party announced that it would challenge the results in court, although Buhari himself rejected that approach, saying that the courts had already demonstrated their impotence. Instead, Buhari wants to re-run the election and declared that it is "up to the Nigerian people to accept slavery or stand up for their rights." On May 1, Buhari led a mass protest to demand a new poll.

For his part, Yar'Adua has extended an olive branch to his rivals and said that he wants to resolve the crisis by forming a government of national unity. Of course, that would allow Yar'Adua to remain president in spite of his artificial mandate.

The wild card in this situation is the sitting president, Obasanjo. Critics have speculated for months that Obasanjo would provoke a crisis in order to justify an extension of his presidency. Despite ample warning that the April elections would degenerate into a farce, Obasanjo aided and abetted that process. Now, if there is no resolution to the crisis before May 29, Obasanjo may get exactly what he wants.

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### The Oil Curse

Nigeria's politicians bear direct responsibility for the persistent dysfunction of their country's political system. Yet the behavior of Nigerian politicians is impossible to understand without a close examination of the perverse incentives created by great reservoirs of oil.

For countries with very few inhabitants and a lot of oil, it is a blessing, not a curse. In the microstates of the Persian Gulf, oil generates so much wealth that the ruling families can purchase the loyalty of their subjects by providing them with a Western standard of living. Even then, there is more than enough money left over for local princes to indulge their taste for sports cars, racehorses, palaces, and private jets.

Middle-sized kingdoms like Saudi Arabia have found it hard to maintain this arrangement after decades of rapid population growth. In Nigeria, such an arrangement was impossible from the beginning. Today, Nigeria has a population of 140 million, or one-sixth of the entire population of sub-Saharan Africa. If each citizen received an equal share of the nation's annual income from oil, the payoff would amount to a little more than $300.

Nonetheless, Nigeria's oil wealth is more than sufficient to subvert its economy and government. Other sectors of the economy have withered as a result of the magnetic attraction of oil. The average Nigerian is much poorer now than he was when the country achieved its independence from Britain in 1960.

Oil also promotes awesome amounts of corruption. The government's collection of oil revenue requires almost no effort, since a small number of multinational corporations, such as Shell and Chevron, locate and extract the oil but turn over more than half of their profits to the government. On average, oil provides 90 to 95 percent of all government revenue. Taxation on every other kind of economic activity is negligible.

Almost no taxes may sound great, but without taxation there is no representation. Since Nigerian politicians don't depend on voters paying taxes, they don't care much about voters' opinions. Instead, politicians focus on maximizing their personal share of the government's oil revenue. When elections roll around, politicians use their share of that revenue to buy, beg, or steal enough votes to stay in office.

Of course, the incumbent doesn't always prevail. Sometimes, the challenger does a better of job of bribing officials, stuffing ballot boxes, and organizing a private army of thugs to intimidate his or her rivals. This pattern applies at every level of government, so that state and local elections tend to be just as fraudulent as federal elections.

### The Insurgency

The Niger Delta is the home of both the Nigerian oil industry and several million members of an ethnic minority called the Ijaw. Located on the country's southern coast, where the Niger River flows into the Atlantic Ocean, the Delta is a maze of mangrove swamps dotted by many villages but few roads or cities.

The Delta is home to crime syndicates that specialize in the "bunkering," i.e., theft, of oil. Bunkering is a sophisticated operation that involves extensive networks of workers, trucks, and tanker boats. It thrives in broad daylight because the syndicates pay off those politicians, policemen, and military officers who might otherwise try to stop them. Current estimates indicate that 40,000 barrels of oil are bunkered every 24 hours, providing an annual income of $1.5 billion to the syndicates.

The Delta is also home to a very angry population that must endure oil spills and acid rain without deriving much benefit from the oil industry that thrives on their land. The Delta residents also believe that they have been victimized because of their Ijaw ethnicity. Their resentment of the federal government has helped transform the bunkering syndicates into something that more closely resembles a guerrilla insurgency. Once poorly armed, the insurgents now fight with heavy machine guns and shoulder-fired rockets, matching the firepower of the soldiers they oppose. Thanks to their firepower and innovative tactics, the insurgents often prevail in such confrontations.

However, the crisis in the Delta is less military than it is political. The government is losing on the battlefield because it is so thoroughly corrupt. Provincial governors in the Delta often cooperate more with the insurgents than with the federal government. Officers up to the rank of admiral have been discharged for their role in vast bunkering enterprises. Meanwhile, the insurgents are showing greater discipline, expressed via the consolidation of several organizations into the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, or MEND.

Not surprisingly, the most violent and thoroughly rigged elections in Nigeria take place in the Niger Delta. Whereas legitimate state and local governments might work to address the grievances that fuel the insurgency, the criminals now in office mostly serve to validate the insurgents' credentials as the authentic voice of the people.

### Global Implications

The insurgency in the Niger Delta is not just a local problem or even a national one. The violence in the Delta has shut down almost a fourth of the Nigerian oil industry. In 2004, the price of crude oil rose above $50 per barrel for the first time ever, after a Nigerian guerrilla commander threatened to wage "all-out war" against the government.

Even if the insurgents shut down a third or a half of the Nigerian oil industry, it might not provoke a global crisis. Yet if there were another crisis at the same time in Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, or Venezuela, the price of oil might double yet again. Instead of three dollars for a gallon of gas, we might be paying six.

Nigeria is a country we can't afford to ignore, yet we are trying our best. In the ten days after the April 21 election, there wasn't a single front-page story about Nigeria in the *Washington Post*. The *New York Times* managed just one, along with stories about video games, pet food, and a 370 lb. football player.

Yet if Nigeria can't resolve its presidential crisis before Gov. Yar'Adua's scheduled inauguration on May 29, it may be in the headlines very soon. ♦



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# The Mystery of Michael Bloomberg

*Why does a popular but mediocre mayor think he should run for president?*

**By Fred Siegel & Michael Goodwin**

*New York*

There is a stunning disconnect between Michael Bloomberg's modest accomplishments as mayor of New York and his elevation to a figure worthy of presidential consideration—albeit as an independent candidate. In Bloomberg's own words, "How likely is a 5′7″-Jew-from-New-York billionaire who's divorced and running as an independent to become president of the United States?"

The answer is obvious, but that doesn't mean Bloomberg and his billions couldn't become a major force in national politics. Or that he doesn't have a plan that would, under the right conditions, put him in the Oval Office. His plan, he tells confidants, is to spend upwards of $500 million of his own money—about twice as much as the major party nominees—on TV ads and get-out-the-vote efforts, a strategy that's worked for him twice in New York. The only catch is that he first wants to see who Democrats and Republicans nominate. If the parties put up fringe-leaning nominees, leaving the middle open, Bloomberg would use his moneybags to try to create a centrist path to victory.

Meanwhile, the outlines of his platform are clearly visible. He's been zigzagging across the country, including in some primary states, leading the charge for handgun control, public health reform, and his "reformist" educational policies. Think of a sane George Soros.

The *Washington Post* has featured his presidential possibilities on its front page; *Slate* has touted him as a great manager; the *New York Times*, *New York* magazine, and the *New York Sun* are enthusiastic about a Bloomberg run; Rupert Murdoch was quoted as saying the mayor "would be my choice" for president, while savvy consultants are mapping out the scenarios that would give him a chance. In a mixed omen, Al Sharpton, warm to a Bloomberg candidacy, has described him as "Ross Perot with a résumé." It's quite an array.

Looming behind the disjuncture between his managerial failures as mayor and the presidential palaver is the mystery of how a mayor so emotionally detached from the lives of most New Yorkers, so aggressively aloof from the supposedly populist sentiments of New York politics, can be riding so high in the local polls. Even after a rough first quarter in this, his sixth year in office, his job approval ratings generally hit 70 percent.

True, his low-key personality was a relief to many New Yorkers after Rudy Giuliani's brawling. But his passionless, matter-of-fact approach to the job stands in stark contrast to the from-the-gut styles of the two most recent successful and popular mayors, Ed Koch and Giuliani. Indeed, Bloomberg's style is closer to that of failures Abe Beame and David Dinkins. Of Koch, who led the city out of the 1970s fiscal crisis, the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan said, "History will record [him] as having given back New York City its morale." Rudy beat down the twin scourges of crime and soaring welfare dependency. After almost a term and a half, it is still impossible to credit Bloomberg with a transformative achievement or discern any legacy.

Bloomberg's reputation is built on the idea that he's not just another politician but an apolitical manager who rises above petty interests. But this image reverses the reality. Bloomberg's failures have been managerial, while he's been a brilliant success politically by catering—via the city treasury and his own fortune—to those petty interests.

Bloomberg's greatest substantive achievement is to have successfully continued Giuliani's reforms regarding crime and welfare. He has also continued Giuliani's aggressive pro-development policies that, combined with

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the recent economic boom, have led to a record number of housing starts and an unemployment rate that is the lowest in 30 years. But where he has struck out on his own, it has been a different matter.

"Manager Mike," the first mayor to also be the city's wealthiest man, put education at the center of his 2001 run for mayor. Beginning with his first campaign speech, he pledged "to do for education what Giuliani did for public safety." He invited people to judge him on the issue and said he wanted to be the "education mayor." Based in part on that promise of accountability, Bloomberg was given unprecedented mayoral control of the schools, which had been in the hands of a fractious and unaccountable Board of Education.

He has done a marvelous job of selling himself as a model school reformer to the New York press, to the New York elites, and to mayors across the country. Mayors Antonio Villaraigosa of Los Angeles and Adrian Fenty of Washington, D.C., have spoken of Bloomberg as their model, "the standard-bearer for educational reform."

But the "reformed" school system led by Bloomberg's chancellor, Joel Klein, a former high-ranking Justice Department lawyer, has been more notable for administrative upheaval and noncompetitive contracts than higher test scores. Over the last five years—despite $4 billion in additional spending (the annual operating budget for education is now more than $16 billion and the city has a five-year, $10 billion education capital budget) and three harrowing reorganizations of the original "reform"—student performance has been basically flat. Reading scores in many elementary schools are up, but math scores in middle schools have declined. Graduation rates have inched up, but still barely 50 percent graduate in four years.

Bloomberg and Klein have lurched from their initial strong central control of the schools to a recent attempt at decentralization, both of which have sown confusion. Things began badly when they instituted a "progressive" education curriculum that had failed everywhere it was tried. More recently there has been a school bus fiasco: Roughly 7,000 students were left stranded in the dead of winter when a new routing plan imposed by an expensive consulting firm with a no-bid contract proved unworkable. Blasted by parents and critics, Bloomberg denounced them as know-nothings "who have no experience in doing anything." The parents, he snapped, just need to call 311, the all-purpose gripe-and-information line he established.

The imperiousness was striking, and it is often more than stylistic. Mild-mannered Democrat Bill Thompson, the city comptroller and former Board of Education president who plans to run for mayor in 2009, when Bloomberg will be forced out by term limits, complains that "I can't talk to the mayor about education," because Bloomberg sees criticism as either a front for the unions or as a personal attack on Klein.

Thompson had a sometimes rocky relationship with Giuliani but notes that while "Rudy could be a pain in the ass, . . . he really understood this stuff." Added Thompson: "If you asked for more money, he wanted to know exactly how it would be spent."

Giuliani, by legal training and temperament, was hands-on, sometimes to a fault, but he almost always knew enough about a topic to evaluate the advice he was given. Bloomberg, on the other hand, has never immersed himself in the details of either city government or education. He delegates responsibility to deputies like Klein, who himself has limited interest in budgetary and programmatic intricacies. "You ask Joel," explains Thompson, "where the money is going, and he'll say something like 'to improve reading scores.'" Asked whether he sees any real gain in schools under Bloomberg, Thompson says only that "the jury is still out."

Yet the public doesn't blame Bloomberg. He gets credit for trying to fix the schools, and Klein gets the blame when things go wrong. The pattern is similar with the NYPD. Bloomberg gets credit for keeping crime low, but when cops recently killed an unarmed black man in Queens in a hail of 50 bullets, activists demanded the scalp not of Bloomberg, but of the very successful police commissioner Ray Kelly.

Both cases illustrate how Bloomberg has managed the politics by greasing the usual skids. With the police shooting case, Bloomberg abandoned the cops, three of whom were later indicted and now await trial. Shortly after the shooting, the mayor said, "It sounds to me like excessive force was used" and deemed the incident "inexplicable" even before the details were known.

On schools, Bloomberg has neatly separated himself from Klein by handing out generous raises to the very teachers' union fighting Klein's reforms. The contract that runs through the end of his term provides cumulative hikes of nearly 41 percent. And while there have been modest productivity gains—30 minutes were added to the school day, meaning teachers must be in the schools all of 6 hours and 50 minutes—time- and money-wasting work rules and perks, all part of a 204-page contract that Klein tried to reduce to 8 pages, have survived largely intact. So while the unions detest Klein and openly urge he be fired, Bloomberg skates on by.

The managerial failures don't stop with the schools. Nearly six years after 9/11, the city has only begun to make real progress on Ground Zero in large part because it was never a Bloomberg priority. Like mob bosses, he and Gov.


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George Pataki divided up Manhattan—Pataki got downtown and Bloomberg focused on the far West Side of Midtown. In his first term, Bloomberg tried to succeed where Giuliani failed by building a football stadium there for the New York Jets, hoping then to use the stadium as the centerpiece of his plan to lure the Olympics to Gotham.

Indeed, Bloomberg's early economic development program, aside from some sensible rezoning proposals, consisted mostly of attracting the Olympics. Money was no object. Bloomberg proposed to subsidize the well-endowed Jets ownership by giving them for a mere $200 million a West Side Manhattan property worth a billion dollars on the open market. The plan was defeated by the opposition of the Dolan family, which owns Madison Square Garden, and by State Assembly speaker Sheldon Silver, the entrenched Democrat who represents a district in lower Manhattan. The International Olympic Committee finally ended the wrangling by awarding the 2012 games to London.

Bloomberg's dogged pursuit of his unpopular stadium plan and his record level property tax hikes combined to give him a 24 percent approval rating, the lowest ever held by a modern mayor. It was no mean feat to be rated below the disastrous David Dinkins. Midway through his first term, it appeared that Bloomberg would have a hard time winning a second one.

But to Bloomberg's great good fortune, the former Bronx Borough president and Dinkins ally, Democrat Freddy Ferrer, again came to his rescue. Ferrer, who called himself the "un-Giuliani," working with Sharpton, had made Bloomberg mayor in 2001, when he devoted all his energies to subverting the campaign of fellow Democrat Mark Green.

In 2005, Ferrer, who campaigned on repealing the Giuliani policing reforms and raising taxes, made for such an appalling alternative that his candidacy, plus Bloomberg's ability to spend considerably more on consultants than Ferrer spent on his entire campaign, carried Bloomberg to a record level victory margin. In his two campaigns, Bloomberg has, with the aid of top notch consultants, directly spent nearly $160 million, while his opponents spent a total of $24 million.

Bloomberg can thank the hedge fund and private equity boom on Wall Street, the record high stock market, and soaring real estate values for keeping his budget in the black. But not even the good economic times would have been enough to maintain his popularity given his many gaffes if New York were the city it once was or is assumed to be.

Consider the following: The mayor was informed that a set of subway switches had burned out and couldn't be replaced for months or even years, guaranteeing massive delays. Bloomberg, an engineer, nonchalantly said fine, that's the way it will have to be. He reversed himself only after howls of public protest. And only then did transit officials acknowledge that they could do most of the job in weeks.

Or consider this: After a July 2006 blackout produced by Con Ed incompetence left more than 100,000 Queens residents without electricity for a week, Manager Mike declined even to visit the affected areas until the press began to hound him. Even then he declared, "I think [Con Ed CEO] Kevin Burke deserves a thanks from this city. He's worked as hard as he can. . . ."

It's safe to say Bloomberg will never be confused with Fiorello LaGuardia. When it comes to holding people accountable, Bloomberg seems to have taken lessons from George W. Bush.

At a time when Brooklyn is experiencing a private sector housing boom, the same businessman mayor who tried to give away valuable Manhattan property for a song has supported a half-billion dollars in direct and indirect subsidies for the Atlantic Yards apartment, office, and arena complex in Brooklyn being built by fellow fat cat and subsidy king Bruce Ratner. Homelessness is at record levels, but no one has been called on the carpet and, again, the public seems to give the mayor credit for trying, even if he fails. And then there are the civil liberties violations: During the GOP convention, hundreds of mostly nonviolent protesters were penned in by chain-link fences topped with barbed-wire for up to 44 hours.

Had homelessness reached unprecedented levels under Giuliani, the interest groups would have been marching in the streets. Had Rudy proposed a similar level of subsidy for a project like Atlantic Yards, the liberals would have howled with rage. Had Giuliani held protesters behind barbed wire, the *Village Voice* would have relentlessly argued that fascism had (once again) arrived in New York, and the *New York Times* would have run a 34-part series about the assault on civil liberties.

Why didn't this happen? It didn't occur for the same reason most Republicans have been remarkably quiet about Bloomberg's penchant for raising taxes and revenue by (1) ticketing store owners with fines for "illegal awnings" (too many letters) and (2) ticketing cars trapped in snow storms. The New York State Republican organization is more of a business, a local franchise, than it is a political party. In 2001, the year he ran for election to succeed Giuliani, Bloomberg donated $705,000 to the state GOP, the largest donation since the days of Nelson Rockefeller. In 2002, while George Pataki was running for reelection for his third and final term as governor, Bloomberg donated


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another half-million to the party, and he's continued to give. The money buys acquiescence if not adulation.

Similarly, in the years before he ran for mayor, Bloomberg supported worthwhile African-American, Asian, and Latino arts organizations with generous and sometimes massive contributions. Half a million dollars went to the well-respected Dance Theater of Harlem and $100,000 to Ballet Hispanico. As he geared up for reelection in 2005, he donated at least $140 million to more than 800 institutions and groups, including to Lenora Fulani, an anti-Semite who ran the local, cult-aligned Independence party.

All his generosity might not have availed Bloomberg of popularity if New York still possessed a sizable, civically engaged middle class. Instead we have a barbell social structure, with the very wealthy and a vast upper middle class on one side, a massive number of immigrant and minority poor on the other, and little in between. The middle class as such is less than 20 percent of the population here.

Most of its members live by serving the wealthy above them or the poor below. Insulated though they are, the upper middle class resent the truly wealthy who bid up the cost of real estate. But with their kids in private schools and private recreation programs, they have little need for city government outside of public safety. They like the mayor's low-key style. As long as crime remains under control, Bloomberg's failures, in so far as they are even aware of them, don't impinge on them.

The failed schools and the hourglass economy don't provide much upward mobility for workaday immigrant and nonimmigrant strivers. They leave the city anyway, draining off potential discontent. Exit makes far more sense than trying to buck the cost structure and political system beholden to organized interests. Besides, they are continually replaced by new arrivals. Still, soaring housing prices, stagnant job growth, and the highest combined state and local taxes in the country have, notes urbanist Joel Kotkin, produced a high rate of out-migration by the college-educated population.

Bloomberg's slender list of achievements will make it hard for him should he enter the national race. And although he's been running for president—despite demurrals—for some time, he's unlikely to become an open candidate unless one or both of the parties nominate unelectable duds—think Newt Gingrich versus John Edwards. If, come the super-primaries on February 5, 2008, the nominees are Rudy and Hillary, Bloomberg will keep his money in his pocket. He won election as mayor in 2001 by spending $92 a vote, but not even Michael Bloomberg can do that kind of checkbook politics on a national scale. ♦


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# Spiritualpolitique

*Religion matters more than ever in global affairs. But don't count on the experts—or the State Department—to know that.*

**By John J. DiIulio Jr.**

Speaking last December before journalists assembled by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, Peter Berger had some explaining to do. Berger, an emeritus professor at Boston University, is a rightly esteemed sociologist of religion. "We live in an age of overwhelming religious globalization," he began. But, as late as a quarter-century ago, neither he nor most other academics saw it coming. Most analysts, he explained, had the same stale orthodoxy about religion's inevitable demise. "The idea was very simple: the more modernity, the less religion. . . . I think it was wrong."

Except in Europe, where it has proven half-right, the idea was all wrong. This year marks the European Union's 50th anniversary. Next year is the 40th since Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Europeans mocked the pope's warnings about family planning cultures that promote abortion and produce few children. As a result, a fitting inscription for the European Union's gold watches would be "World's largest unfunded pension liability land mass."

Europe still has more Christians (over 500 million) than any other continent. In Rome and several other European cities, Catholicism, but not its practice, still permeates local culture, while its architectural pageantry promotes foreign tourism. But post-1968 survey data on European beliefs, church attendance rates, and more show that postindustrial modernity has indeed loosened if not broken Christianity's grip on the continent's diverse peoples. Still, this decades-in-the-making European vacation from Christianity is not a permanent vacation from religion itself. From Scotland to France, Christianity's slide has been accompanied by growth in other faith traditions including Islam. And it is not entirely clear that Europe's Catholics have fallen so far from the cradle that their children or grandchildren (if they start having some) will never return.

Most countries once ruled, in whole or in part, by Europeans have modernized to varying degrees, but without religion losing its hold. Christianity, in particular, is growing in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. One cannot begin to understand post-colonial Africa, for example, without knowing how profoundly religion matters—and which religions matter where and to whom. Nigeria is one small case in point. There are now about 20 million Anglicans in Nigeria, on the way to 30 to 35 million over the next generation. In 1900, Nigeria was one-third Muslim and had almost no Christians. By 1970, the country was about 45 percent Muslim and 45 percent Christian.

Outside of Nigeria, Anglicanism is hardly the wave of the future, but Pentecostalism and other charismatic varieties of Christianity might be. Throughout the 20th century, various Pentecostal sects crept or swept through Latin America and Africa. In each continent, Pentecostals are now an estimated one-tenth to one-fifth of the population. In Asia, Pentecostals now number well over 150 million, with concentrations in places like South Korea.

No matter what the host country or culture, Pentecostals tend to start fast but remain concentrated in one city or region for a generation or two before spreading. Here in America, the century-old Pentecostal Church of God in Christ, a predominantly African-American denomination, now stretches from traditional storefront "Holy Ghost" or "blessing station" ministries in the South (still its home base) to a 26,000-member congregation in Los Angeles, the West Angeles Church of God in Christ, where Hollywood celebrities crowd into cathedral pews next to the inner-city poor.

In 2005 and 2006, the cathedral's presiding pastor, Bishop Charles E. Blake, traveled extensively in Africa and met with top government leaders in Zambia and other nations. Through a new nonprofit organization called Save Africa's Children, he expanded the church's HIV/AIDS ministries in sub-Saharan Africa. Via satellite broadcasts, he and other U.S.-based Pentecostal pas-

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tors are heard by poor people in Africa and other places. When Blake goes to these countries, he is mobbed like a rock-of-ages star.

Most international relations experts, however, know little about Pentecostals in America or abroad. Many journalists who cover global affairs could not tell you who Bishop Blake is. A few might even have trouble identifying another California preacher who has partnered with Blake on several international initiatives, Rick Warren. In 2005, at the same Pew-sponsored event that featured Berger in 2006, I was the opening act for Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*: *What On Earth Am I Here For?* I joked that the conference organizers wanted the day's first two speakers to average 15 million in book sales (his 30 million and my next to none). Most laughed, but some were puzzled, apparently unaware of Warren's massive success.

First published in 2002, and since reissued in many different languages, Warren's prayer-and-meditation manual has sold globally in volumes few nonfiction books have ever achieved. (Warren co-pastors a megachurch in California called Saddleback, with more than 80,000 members.) The goateed, born-again baby-boomer boasts a Bible-believing pro-life, pro-family theology. True to stereotype, a few journalists at the gathering looked for Pat Robertson beneath Warren's Hawaiian-print shirt but could not find him. In fact, Warren has long since fallen out with many fellow white evangelical leaders. To them, his sins include cavorting with Pentecostals and others they consider to be theologically incorrect; tooting "creation care" (environmental protection); and nonpartisan hobnobbing with pro-choice politicians, including Democrats, who share his global antipoverty and public health agendas.

At the Pew gathering, the purpose-filled pastor got relatively few questions in the session and over meals about his international ministries and other globe-trotting adventures. His various training programs and "tool kits" have reached an estimated 400,000 ministers in more than a hundred countries. His interfaith antipoverty and public health (most recently antimalaria) programs have purportedly reached millions. His biggest battles to date have been over how he has used his global bully pulpit. For instance, last November he saddled over to Syria and sounded off on human rights, but seemed dangerously naive about the regime's terrorist ties. In February he was scheduled to preach in North Korea but postponed the trip. (Good call.)

Still by far the single biggest "megachurch" presence on the global scene is the Catholic church. Roman Catholicism claims a billion followers and growing. America's Catholics, roughly a quarter of the U.S. population, are just 5 percent of the church's global flock. Pope Benedict XVI is "too strict" for many Catholics in America, not to mention Catholics in Europe. But he is generally viewed as a moderate by the conservative Catholic leaders and throngs in Africa.

All in all, there are today two billion Christians worldwide, and Christianity in various orthodox forms, from Pentecostalism to Vatican-certified Catholicism, is the world's fastest-growing religion. Take it from Penn State's superb global religions watcher, Philip Jenkins, who has established beyond any reasonable empirical or historical doubt that, for decades now, Catholicism and many other Christian sects have been growing rapidly in the southern hemisphere. By or before 2050, Africa will supplant Europe as home to the most Christians. In 1900, Africa had an estimated 10 to 15 million Christians. In 1959, the Catholic church had not yet appointed a single black African cardinal. By 2000, however, Africa had some 350 million Christians, including well over 100 million Catholics.

Some demographers would bet that Latin America will outdistance Africa, and that South America will be first to succeed Europe as the continent with the most Christians. It has long had the heaviest country-by-country Catholic concentrations. Even as Pentecostals and other Christian sects have made converts, South America's Catholic seminaries have grown (up more than 350 percent since 1972). The Vatican counts some 60,000 priests, 100,000 lay missionaries, and 130,000 nuns on the continent.

So, from Brazil to Belize, from Beirut to Boston, religion in over a hundred forms and in a thousand different ways has outlived "modernity" and "postmodernity," too. And whenever religious individuals, ideas, and institutions get newly mobilized into politics and public affairs, at home or abroad, look out, because they have the power to transform things, and fast.

For example, just consider how the late Pope John Paul II changed both the Church and Latin America by throwing Catholicism's weight behind democracy movements there (as he also did on other continents). In 1987, the pope confronted Chile's dictator, General Pinochet, with these words: "I am not the evangelizer of democracy; I am the evangelizer of the Gospel. To the Gospel message, of course, belong all the problems of human rights; and, if democracy means human rights, it also belongs to the message of the Church."

History teaches that democracy has not done well in countries dominated by Catholicism, Islam, and Con-


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fucianism. But as I argued in Rome before the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in 1998, Catholicism changed after World War II. I invoked the political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset, who, writing that same year, agreed that the Church had changed "in ways that positively affected the potential for democracy."

Similarly, writing in 1991, Harvard's Samuel P. Huntington explored the global fortunes of democracy during the period 1974 to 1990, which he termed democracy's "third wave." Huntington identified 33 instances of democratization (versus just three of "democratic reversal"). Religion, he argued, was critical to this wave: "In many countries, Protestant and Catholic church leaders have been central in the struggles against repressive [governments]. . . . Catholicism was second only to economic development as a pervasive force making for democratization in the 1970s and 1980s."

Correct, but after *The Third Wave*, Huntington half-forgot how best to think about religion. In a controversial 1993 article and 1996 book, he speculated about the conditions under which the world might witness (or avert) a "clash of civilizations." He argued that ideology, economics, and nation-states would be far less central to future international conflicts than they had been in the past. The "principal conflicts of global politics," he predicted, "will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations." He stressed that Western democracies did not have all the answers, and scolded those who graded other "civilizations" by how kindred they were to American political norms.

But Huntington's conceptual framework was a sweeping, multivariable mess that loosely related religion to ethnic, racial, regional, and other history-moving forces. His provocative prediction was not warranted by such empirical data as he mustered. When it came time to delineate "civilizations," he created his own categories: "Islamic" covered places from Albania to Azerbaijan; "Sinic" included China and Vietnam; "Japan" was its own "civilization." And so on. Ostensibly well-informed people describe the situation in Iraq in relation to Huntington's "clash" thesis. But it should be obvious that the contest between Sunnis and Shiites is an *intra*-religious conflict with deep roots in Islamic history. It is not unlike the conflict (receded but not forgotten) in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants, an *intra*-religious conflict with centuries-old roots in Christian history.

You know that you are skirting rather than seeing important realities when you are using identity concepts that are nobody's actual identity. You do not need to go globe-trotting to understand why. For example, New Orleans is home to Mary Queen of Vietnam Church. Its Catholic members are not Creoles or Cajuns. The church's "Post-Katrina Recovery News" website is in Vietnamese. Since the biblical-sized floods receded, its leaders have deepened ties to many English-speaking churches and community groups, Catholic and non-Catholic. To understand these leaders, their people, and their institution, to map their community relations, or to gauge their present or potential civic role, it would not help to categorize them as either "Sinic" expatriates or "Westerners" on the make.

Huntington's big-think Harvard colleague, Joseph S. Nye, has been less controversial and more cogent conceptually. Nye is famous for his 2004 work on so-called soft power, meaning how nations get what they want through attraction rather than coercion (multilateral ties, not military tussles; economic incentives, not muscle-bound sanctions). America, he claims, has squandered opportunities to amass and use soft power. He does not deny that religion can pack a soft-power punch, but religion gets only a few passing mentions in his magnum opus.

Nye opens with Machiavelli, who wrote that it is better for a ruler to be feared than to be loved. Nye challenges that dictum by claiming that soft power often succeeds where hard power fumbles or fails. Fair enough, but as Nye also knows, the medieval Italian for all seasons counseled that rulers need both hard-power swords and soft-power plowshares (or swords that rulers can opt to beat into plowshares as circumstances may dictate).

As Nye might have emphasized, history teaches that when religion is used as hard power, it sooner or later destroys those who wield it. Christianity's hard-power-wielding religions, including king-making Catholicism, had their days (even centuries) but resulted in ruins (and, in Catholicism's case, a junior role in North America). Protestant-inspired church-state separation doctrine is a prudential prohibition against using religion as hard power at home, and a caution against using religion as hard power abroad. It is also an invitation for the state to be faith-friendly, promote religious pluralism, and avoid sectarian strife.

Thus, what I hereby baptize as *spiritualpolitique* is a soft-power perspective on politics that emphasizes religion's domestic and international significance, accounts for religion's present and potential power to shape politics within and among nations, and understands religion not as some abstract force measured by its resiliency vis-à-vis "modernity" and not by its supporting role in "civilizations" that cooperate or clash. Rather, a perspective steeped in *spiritualpolitique* requires attention to


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the particularities that render this or that *actual religion* as preached and practiced by present-day peoples so fascinating to ethnographers (who can spend lifetimes immersed in single sects) and so puzzling to most of the social scientists who seek, often in vain, to characterize and quantify religions, or to track religion-related social and political trends.

Consider how this perspective might inform the ongoing debate on Iraq. Some have advocated increasing the U.S. presence in Iraq and staying there until violence is well under wraps. Others have devised or advocated various draw-down or get-out plans. Although it took a few years, almost all now acknowledge that the struggle behind most homegrown bombings that have killed innocent civilians in Iraq has specific religious roots. But some on both sides in the debate over U.S. policy seem not yet to know that any conflict-ending compromise or resolution, no matter its military, economic, or other features, will not last unless it takes those particular religious differences very seriously. It is not a "civil war." It is "sectarian violence," complicated by the region's wider religious rifts and their intersections with state-supported terrorism networks.

*Spiritualpolitique* lesson one is that even in stable representative democracies, *intra*-national religious cleavages, whether long-buried or out in the open, always matter to who governs and to what ends. The religious cleavages in Iraq existed long before the U.S. occupation. And the sectarian sources of the violence there will persist even if the country somehow, some day becomes a textbook, multi-party, stable parliamentary democracy. (If you doubt it, just study the Israeli Knesset in action.)

*Spiritualpolitique* lesson two is that constitutionalism, *not* democratization, matters most where religious differences run deepest or remain most intense. It was good to hold elections in Iraq. Majority rule via free and fair plebiscites is often among the first steps toward a more humane polity, whatever its official form and legal formalities. But majority rule can also mean the proverbial two wolves and a sheep deciding what is for supper. Constitutionalism, democracy or not, means that a government's powers are limited and any law-abiding civic minority's fundamental rights—starting with religious rights—are legally sacred.

Nothing, however, complicates the march to constitutionalism like religious differences, especially when, as is almost always the case, those differences are fodder for what the Founding Fathers denounced as "foreign intrigues." Consider what James Madison wrote in the Federalist Papers, and reflect on America's own history. When Madison discussed how political "factions" could tear a people apart, the very first source he mentioned was "a zeal for different opinions concerning religion."

The Constitution's ratification was threatened by Protestant true believers who cursed the clause forbidding any religious tests for federal office-holding. They rejected, but Americans now happily live, Madison's vision—a "multiplicity of sects" (Methodists, Muslims, Jews, Catholics, Quakers, and others) that each shape but do not dominate life in this large, commercial republic "under God."

Madison and company cut a political deal known to us as the First Amendment's two religion clauses: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...." This meant that, for the time being, each state could have a tax-funded and ceremonially favored religion if it wanted, but the national government would remain forever neutral on religion. In the early 20th century, the Supreme Court erased the deal's last legal traces by holding that religious liberty is so "fundamental" that no religious establishments by the states are constitutionally permissible.

*Nothing complicates the march to constitutionalism like religious differences, especially when those differences are fodder for what the Founding Fathers denounced as "foreign intrigues."*

Until midcentury, not much changed. But then, in the early 1960s, tradition-minded Protestants, largely self-exiled politically since the Scopes "monkey trials," became convinced that the Court was going too far in ridding religion from the public square (the 1962 decision banning state-sponsored school prayer was the watershed moment). They entered the political fray. Thus began the evangelical mobilizations that revolutionized our two-party politics and shaped several recent presidential elections.

Interestingly enough, the single biggest program to result from born-again President Bush's push for faith-based initiatives has been international, not domestic: a $15 billion, five-year effort to address the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. In May 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with the aforementioned Bishop Charles Blake and other church leaders with ties to religious non-governmental organizations abroad that could help to get the job done.

Targeted mainly at 15 countries, and zeroing in on Africa (where two-thirds of the more than 3.5 million yearly deaths from the disease now occur), the soft-power program was championed inside the West Wing by Michael Gerson, the chief speechwriter who became the


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president's "compassion agenda" czar. Gerson is now a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He and his council colleague Walter Russell Mead are two foreign policy wonks who take religion seriously. And the council's president, Richard N. Haass, has publicly opined that religion matters in world affairs today more than it has for centuries.

But Gerson, Mead, and Haass remain exceptions to the expert rule, and not only at the council. In fact, to a remarkable degree, most foreign policy elites remain not only ignorant but also reluctant when it comes to discussing religion. In November 2006, the Pew Charitable Trusts (parent to the Pew religion program cited above) published in its magazine, *Trust*, a feature essay by a freelance writer named Sue Rardin. Entitled "Eyes Wide Shut," Rardin's article quoted numerous thought leaders and policymakers who expressed reservations about focusing on religion. She summarized their core concern as follows: "Addressing religious differences means entering discussions where moral values—our own as well as those of others—may not be governed by reason alone, but may be held more fiercely than if they were."

There is only one word for American foreign policy elites, Democratic and Republican, left and right, who downplay or disregard religion to their peril, ours—and the world's—in deference to the dogma that being faith-free promotes objectivity: preposterous. Or, as Rardin editorialized well: "It's as imprudent to ignore the role of religion in foreign policy as it is to pretend that the elephant is in some other room, rather than right here."

It is bad to doubt the overwhelming empirical evidence that religion matters to domestic politics as well as the delivery of social services. But it is far worse to treat religion as a back-burner reality in global affairs when it is boiling over in so many places. The State Department needs to wake up and smell the incense. There is already an international legal framework for thinking out loud and acting in concert with other nations on religion's role in global affairs. Religious freedom is addressed in the 1948 United Nations "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," Article 18, which encompasses "teaching, practice, worship, and observance." Its terms are echoed by several other U.N. Declarations, including a 1981 General Assembly-backed document calling for ending all state-sponsored religious discrimination.

This international legal framework is reinforced by several federal statutes that were passed with bipartisan support. For instance, a 1998 federal law, signed by President Clinton, puts America firmly on the hook to support religious freedom abroad (the International Religious Freedom Act). Subject to that act, the State Department and other federal agencies are required to report any relevant information they have regarding "countries of particular concern." The 2006 list included Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan.

Not much, however, is actually done by Washington to act on these concerns, end religious persecution, or support nations that abide by both U.N. and U.S. standards governing respect for religious pluralism. Just how little can be glimpsed by comparing the federal government's faith-based funding at home and abroad.

At home, domestic sacred places serving civic purposes have been discriminated against in myriad ways by grant-making federal agencies. Things have gotten a bit better since the first relevant federal laws protecting their rights went on the books in 1996. The Bush administration boasts that more than $2 billion a year in federal grants now goes to qualified, community-serving faith-based organizations. Even if that figure is accepted at face value (many experts dispute it), $2 billion is still a relative pittance: The federal government gives out hundreds of billions of dollars in such grants each year, and over a third of all organizations supplying certain social services in big cities are faith-based.

It is, however, a bishop's ransom compared with the $591 million that the United States Agency for International Development granted faith-based organizations operating abroad in Fiscal Year 2005. Last September, Terri Hasdorff, the agency's faith-based center director, testified before the House Subcommittee on Africa. She noted that "the vast majority of faith-based awards are made to a small number of groups." Judged against both the more than $20 billion a year in bilateral foreign aid and the government's professed goal of providing better public health and other services around the globe, it is an astonishingly low sum.

Totalitarians, secular or religious, who know what they are about have always gone beyond merely banning this or that religion or establishing a state religion (Mao's little red book and cult come quickly to mind) to killing religious leaders, gulag-ticketing or terrorizing religious followers, and destroying (physically in many cases) religion's last traces (books, buildings). Religion, however, almost always proves resilient, often reasserting itself in its very pre-revolutionary or dictator-forbidden forms.

Thus, today's democracy-loving, constitutionalism-forging leaders in America and other nations should acknowledge, respect, and, where appropriate, boost religious good works both at home and abroad. When it comes to *spiritualpolitique*, God will help those who help others. ♦


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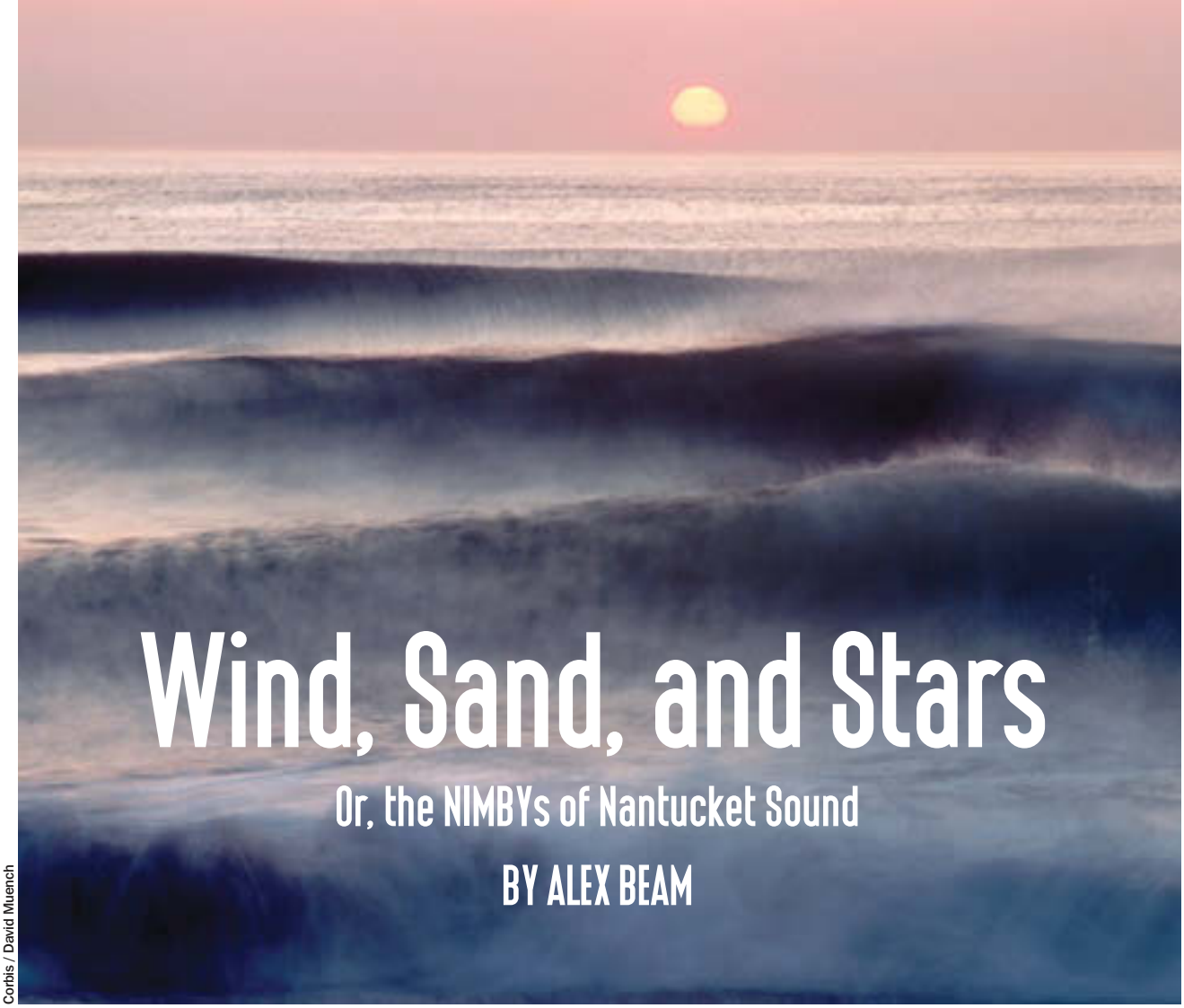

Corbis / David Muench

# Wind, Sand, and Stars

## Or, the NIMBYs of Nantucket Sound

BY ALEX BEAM

*The Massachusetts coast at Cape Cod*

*David McCullough's face contorted with anger.*

That is the first line of Wendy Williams's and Robert Whitcomb's account of one man's possibly misguided attempt to build a wind farm off Cape Cod. My first thought was: Oh, goody. Something snippy about Saint David. I am going to enjoy this.

On page one, McCullough is fulminating about Cape Wind, the 24-square-mile, turbine-powered electrical power project that energy entrepreneur Jim Gordon wants to build in Horseshoe Shoal, not far from McCullough's Martha's Vineyard home. McCullough sputters in fine company, with Walter Cronkite, Rachel "Bunny" Mellon, and all manner of Kennedys. Because, as everyone knows, it is one thing to speak out in favor of homeless shelters, affordable housing, and "clean" energy projects. It is quite another thing to gaze at them from your front door.

**Cape Wind**
*Money, Celebrity, Class, Politics and the Battle for America's Energy Future on Nantucket Sound*
by Wendy Williams and Robert Whitcomb
PublicAffairs, 304 pp., $26.95

Authors Williams and Whitcomb—she is a veteran Cape Cod reporter, he is editorial page editor at the *Providence Journal*—dispense with objectivity in their treatment of the Cape Wind project. Who can blame them? They're having too much fun. The Cape and Islands, as we Bostonians call them, have indeed become a "devil's triangle of entrenched, often inherited wealth," providing targets aplenty for our intrepid writers.

How unsurprising that Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a stalwart contributor to *Vanity Fair*'s perfume-scented "green" issue, vociferously opposes a wind farm in the hallowed waters where he learned to sail. For rhetorical effect, the Kennedys like to call the shoal a "national marine sanctuary," and "one of the richest fisheries in North America." Neither statement is true. The local paper, whose former publisher hobnobbed with the yacht set, often serves as a megaphone for Camelot-on-the-Cape, and has suggested that the benighted city of Fall River would be better suited for wind turbines.

Another Cape Wind opponent, former Phelps Dodge Corp. capo Douglas

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Yearley, explains to an interviewer that, yes, his mining business may have despoiled parts of the American West, but let's face it, New Mexico isn't as pretty as Nantucket. And Yearley doesn't summer in New Mexico, after all.

The Mellons and the DuPonts have summered on the Cape for a lot longer than former cable TV salesman Jim Gordon has been a millionaire, and, naturally, they have powerful friends. Cue the pathetic marital opportunist Sen. John Warner, who nominally represents the people of Virginia. Blubbering to the Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee, Warner invokes his first, pre-Elizabeth Taylor, wife: "A wonderful person who is still a very dear and valued friend. . . . She does have a home on the Cape. I was actually married there."

The wonderful woman in question is Catherine Mellon, daughter of Bunny, the widow of Paul Mellon. Bunny, who is the first person named in Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis's will—Jackie left her two Indian miniatures, by way of thanks for Bunny's help in redesigning the White House Rose Garden—is an ardent Cape Wind opponent. In the book, she accuses a lawyer who does not hate Cape Wind assiduously enough of being a "traitor to your class." That's language you expect to hear on *Masterpiece Theater*, not in George W. Bush's America.

The aggrieved plutocrats do what aggrieved plutocrats everywhere do. For starters, they fill the campaign coffers of politicians willing to do their bidding. Predictably, Teddy Kennedy and former Massachusetts governor and current presidential candidate Mitt Romney receive special attention. (Inconveniently for the gotrocks, the state's current governor, Deval Patrick, has a palatial second home in the faraway Berkshires; he supports Cape Wind.) Yearley, alongside a local moneybags named Richard Egan, who purchased the ambassadorship to Ireland under Bill Clinton, and the ubiquitous William Koch, among others, have also bankrolled a phony "grass roots" pressure group called the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound.

Williams and Whitcomb feign surprise that the Alliance and its powerful backers don't play fair. "In my 30 years as a journalist, I had never seen such a brazen attempt to obstruct the democratic process," Williams tells us in a breathy Author's Note. What? Just because they're dressed for croquet doesn't mean they won't swing the mallet at your head. The Alliance litigates, filibusters, and successfully packs regulatory hearings with its supporters. They have been effective. Time equals money in the business world, and in April, a federal agency announced yet another delay in Cape Wind's environmental review, pushing the project into its sixth year of pushmepullyou legal wrangling.

Yes, there are some good guys. There is an incorruptible pro-Cape Wind state senator whom the Alliance lawyers and dirty tricksters cannot unseat. There is a Lehman Brothers investment banker named Theodore Roosevelt IV, who summers on the Vineyard and is gung-ho for Cape Wind. "My wife *hates* my position," he admits. P.J. O'Rourke's friend and neighbor, former New Hampshire congressman Charlie Bass, supported Cape Wind—on principle. "He's a man of conviction, he just does this stuff sometimes" is how a lobbyist explains Bass's aberrant behavior. Jack Welch is a traitor to his Nantucket neighbors. He supports Cape Wind because General Electric makes the turbines.

The authors relate how, *pace* President Bush, Cape Wind has proved to be a uniter, not a divider. Outraged by the shenanigans on Capitol Hill—not only Warner, but also Alaska's notorious "bridge to nowhere" congressman Don Young have tried to throttle the child of Aeolus in its watery crib—such unlikely bedfellows as Robert Novak, the *Washington Post*, and the *Washington Times* have leapt to Cape Wind's defense.

How rare for Sun Myung Moon's scribblers, to say nothing of Rupert Murdoch's salarymen at Fox News, to find themselves allied with the merry pranksters from Greenpeace, who have injected some badly needed humor into the Cape Wind imbroglio. Greenpeace produced an ad showing a roly-poly senator standing knee-deep in salt water, brandishing a wooden mallet. As wind turbines surface, the senator smashes them down, Whac-a-Mole style, complaining that "I might see them from my mansion on the Cape." Fox News commentators Sean Hannity and Alan Colmes loved the ad, and gave it air play.

Greenpeace teased Robert Kennedy Jr. during an anti-Cape Wind photo op and infiltrated a Ted Kennedy book-signing in Washington. While the senior senator from Massachusetts signed copies of *America Back on Track*, replete with predictable complaints about the country's energy policy, Greenpeaceniks handed out dummy book covers to people waiting in line. Their alternate title: *How I Killed America's First Offshore Wind Farm*.

I ask you, where is the respect?

*Cape Wind* is breezy and informative fun. Here is my inevitable demurrer. Should the authors have asked themselves, Is it really such a smart idea to set up 130, 440-foot-tall, massive propeller towers in Ted Kennedy's private bathtub? Okay, they are five miles offshore, and they loom low on the horizon. But still, this is the same water where John Forbes Kerry likes to windsurf, close to the Forbes family's privately owned island, adjacent to shorelines now almost entirely owned by very wealthy families. The authors initially describe Cape Wind entrepreneur Gordon as smart, and then as stubborn. So far he has invested $20 million of his own money in the project. Is it possible that he is just plain stupid?

Out of curiosity, I asked coauthor Whitcomb about the odds of Cape Wind ever being built. He thinks the project now has a 65 percent chance of completion, which is a radical change in fortune. Three years ago, the odds were closer to 100-1 against. A state bureaucrat whose judgment I trust says the odds are closer to 50-50, but that's still pretty good.

If I told you I wanted to build a 24-square-mile power plant in Ted Kennedy's backyard, you would say I'm crazy. Now I'm only half crazy. ♦



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# Money Ill Spent

*What foundations do wrong and, occasionally, right.*

**BY MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER**

Spend enough time in the world of nonprofits and you discover that foundations, for all their wealth and power, are organizations with very thin skins. The pages of the professional philanthropic journals are brimming with agonized articles by program officers and foundation presidents that, stripped of pseudo-scientific jargon, list the endless reasons their employers just don't get any respect.

Having read far too many of these articles, I can boil all of them down to a single paragraph: "Why don't people *like* foundations? We're doing *good*. We're *helping* people. Our grantees *love* us. Sure, our president may make $700,000 a year, but being a foundation president is *tough*. Don't people *know* that? And that guy from the Senate Finance Committee who keeps bugging us about first-class tickets and four-star hotels. Doesn't he know how *exhausting* it is to fly these days?"

As part of their defensive strategy, about once a decade a book emerges from the nonprofit world that tries to explain to a general audience how wonderful foundations are. With the notable exception of Waldemar Nielsen's valuable *The Golden Donors* (1985), most of these books gather dust in university libraries.

*Martin Morse Wooster, a senior fellow at the Capital Research Center, is the author, most recently, of* Great Philanthropic Mistakes.

Joel L. Fleishman's *The Foundation* is yet another defense of philanthropy by a seasoned insider. Fleishman, who teaches at Duke Law School, has some virtues as a writer. He does recognize that the nonprofit world has flaws that businesses don't have. Corporations, after all, have to please the public if they are to survive, and CEOs who cause the company's stock price to fall get sacked. Foundations, by contrast, face no market test. They can do whatever they want with their wealth. As a result, the law of motion in foundations is that programs, once created, continue endlessly unless stopped by an outside force (a congressional committee, or a riot).

Hulton Archive / Getty Images

*Andrew Carnegie*

This unchecked power, Fleishman notes, "creates an unhealthy cocoon-like insulation for foundations, one in which arrogance, arbitrariness, failure to communicate, and all the other besetting sins are all the more likely to flourish."

"The arrogance foundations are accused of," Fleishman adds, "is, ironically, a disguised form of insecurity. Despite their immense wealth and power, many foundations seem afraid of their own shadows."

Fleishman is also right in some of the solutions he calls for to make foundations more accountable to the public. Part of the reason foundations seem so secretive is that the press wrongly ignores them. Most newspapers, including such large ones as the *Washington Post*, don't have anyone regularly reporting about philanthropy. Foundations ought to get as much coverage in the press as colleges and universities do.

Finally, Fleishman is right that more extensive regulation of nonprofits would not address the problem of foundation accountability. Congress has, in recent years, flirted with draconian proposals for regulating foundations, such as creating a regulatory structure comparable to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. These new regulations would force foundations to spend more money on lawyers and accountants and less on charity.

Fleishman argues that the current overseers of charities—the Internal Revenue Service and state attorneys general—do a poor job of making sure that foundations obey the law. He endorses an idea proposed by the former IRS charity regulator Marc Owens to create a quasigovernmental organization to police foundations that would have the same power over



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Corbis / Robert Holmes

*Atrium at the Ford Foundation building, New York*

nonprofits that the National Association of Securities Dealers has over stockbrokers. Owens's idea is certainly worth debating.

Yet while Fleishman is correct in some of his diagnosis of philanthropic problems, he is fundamentally wrong in his analysis of the history of foundations. He also asks foundations to continue bad practices that waste money and ensure philanthropic mediocrity.

Fleishman lists 100 case studies of good things that foundations have done to make our country better. When the foundations funded science, they tended to do a good job. For example, the Rockefeller Foundation used its wealth to eradicate hookworm, a disease that ravaged the South a century ago. Rockefeller money also created the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research (now Rockefeller University), whose scientists have made many important medical discoveries.

But when foundations use their wealth to change human behavior, they often fall flat on their faces. Consider one of Fleishman's heroes, Abraham Flexner. In 1908 Flexner published a small book on education in which he quoted the president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Henry S. Pritchett, three times in the first 12 pages. The flattered Pritchett then hired Flexner to write a report on the problems of American medical schools. Flexner's report, which appeared in 1910, exposed many problems in these institutions and ensured that many of the shoddier ones closed their doors.

Flexner then went to the Rockefeller Foundation, where in 1919 he convinced John D. Rockefeller Jr. to let him oversee a $50 million fund to finance medical schools. But the grants came with a substantial string attached: These schools had to ensure that their doctors had no outside incomes from private practices.

**The Foundation**
*A Great American Secret; How Private Wealth Is Changing the World*
by Joel L. Fleishman
PublicAffairs, 384 pp., $27.95

Fleishman says that Flexner's idea "helped to elevate medical education as well as medical research in America to a position of international leadership." It did nothing of the sort. Flexner failed to consider reasonable alternatives, such as allowing medical school professors to have private practices as long as these practices were in a teaching hospital. His tenure as Rockefeller's medical education czar was marked by protracted, savage battles between grantees and the foundation over Flexner's inflexible conditions. These battles only ended with Flexner's ouster from Rockefeller in 1928. Once he was gone and the Depression began, the cash-starved hospitals that had received Rockefeller money abandoned Flexner's rigid rules and allowed their doctors to make money any way they could.

Flexner's story is worth retelling as an example of foundations behaving badly. Foundations often fail because they assume their experts have the one right way to solve a particular problem. They fail to consider reasonable alternatives. For example, in 1979, the Carnegie Corporation funded a commission that argued that public television was necessary because "original American drama, documentaries, [and] programming in science and the arts . . . have already proven unappealing for commercial network distribution." The commissioners could not foresee how such thriving cable networks as the Discovery Channel, the History Channel, and HBO would ensure most lovers of documentaries would watch them on a commercial network rather than PBS.

Foundations also often fail to realize that small-scale grants are often better than large ones. In 1993 Walter Annenberg announced that he would give $500 million for school reform. "I wanted to give an amount big enough to startle private and public leaders," Annenberg told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* at the time.

But Annenberg's money was eagerly consumed by big-city bureaucracies, and resulted in little or no lasting change. Had Annenberg given this huge sum to the private school voucher



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movement, the money would have helped tens of thousands of worthy students get a good education in an inner-city private school.

Foundations would do a better job if they spent less on theory and more on programs that directly help people. Instead of yet more research on the causes of poverty, foundations ought to find the five best faith-based poverty-fighting organizations in their cities and see what help they need. Conservation-minded donors should spend more money preserving land and less money on environmental activists.

Another useful reform would be for donors to place strict term limits on the foundations they create. History shows that, with very rare exceptions, the longer a foundation survives, the less likely it is to perpetuate a donor's ideas. Henry Ford, Andrew Carnegie, and J. Howard Pew strongly supported individual liberty and traditional virtues. But the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts are reflexively liberal philanthropies.

Fleishman notes that lots of donors today have placed strict term limits on their charity. Warren Buffett, for example, has given his money to the Gates Foundation with a term limit. Fleishman argues that perpetual foundations are necessary because they are better able to provide long-term funding rather than short-term grantmaking. But more often than not, perpetual foundations become calcified, rigid, and predictable organizations that spend as little as they can get away with because most of their wealth is tied up in an endowment.

If more foundations were term-limited, they could spend more money for the needs of our time. As John J. Miller notes in *A Gift of Freedom*, because the Olin Foundation was term-limited, it spent about three times as much each year on grants as it would have if the foundation hadn't had a term limit.

*The Foundation* has some merits. But by overstating the strengths and underestimating the weaknesses of foundations, Fleishman's survey is inaccurate and seriously misleading. ♦

# Democracy on Trial

## *Is the American version destined to follow the Greek?*

**BY AARON MACLEAN**

It's easy to make fun of classicists these days. Here is another article in a learned journal, entitled "Ocheia, Mules, and Animal Husbandry in a Prometheus Play: Amending LSJ and Unemending Aeschylus fr. 189a R," which takes 21 pages and cites 43 other works to establish that a two-line fragment of Greek poetry, of agricultural and reproductive significance, has been misunderstood. There is a new volume, the first of a forthcoming series, called *Narrators, Narratees, and Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature*, which, the publishers tell us helpfully, "deals with the definition and boundaries of narrative and the role of narrators and narratees."

**What's Wrong with Democracy?**
*From Athenian Practice to American Worship*
by Loren J. Samons II
California, 327 pp., $27.50

Meanwhile, as the piffle proliferates, ever fewer undergraduates actually major in the field (out of more than a million bachelor's degrees awarded in the United States during the 1990s, fewer than one thousand went to classics majors). Squandering their efforts either on petty philological minutiae or trendy theory, the professional students of Greece and Rome fail to honor the legacy which depends upon their care.

This lament has often, and justly, been sounded in the last few years, most passionately by Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath in their *Who Killed Homer?* Yet, even while we blame the old poet's murderers, we should take care to praise those classicists who actually trouble to perform their duties. With this aim in mind, a happy place to look—even during these years of decline—is the fascinating controversy regarding the historical legacy of democratic Athens.

The rule of the people in that ancient *polis* lasted, with two brief oligarchic interruptions, for only 185 years. Some hold that its story is a tragedy, with democracy playing the splendid and flawed hero; others, that it is a triumph. Speaking broadly, it is the conservatives who claim the tragic line. Certainly, a long line of authors claimed by modern American conservatives—the Athenian Thucydides himself, with others like Hobbes, Burke, and the more federally inclined among the American Founders—have held it.

The tragic tale, very briefly: Having, with Spartan aid, defeated the Persians in 479 B.C., the Athenians took to consolidating their position among the Greeks. (This defeat of their Achaemenid invaders is an indisputable triumph which, incidentally, seems to remain a sore spot for those who inhabit the Persian homeland: At the exhibition *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia*, at the British Museum in London, sponsored by the government of Iran, a placard notes, with a detectable sulk, that the struggles with the free Greek city-states were nothing more than an attempt to impose order on troublesome border territories, which bore little significance to affairs back in Persepolis.) Athens established itself at the head of an alliance—the Delian League—which had, as an explicit *raison d'être*, the mandate to take the war to Asia.

There turned out to be very little of this sort of thing. In fact, the coalition mutated through the middle of

*Aaron MacLean, a Marshall Scholar at Oxford during 2003-06, lives in Cairo.*



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the fifth century into an organization through which Athens exercised the coalition's power at home, and for its own profit. The democracy repeatedly voted to use the tribute collected from its "allies" to build new and ever grander buildings in Athens (including the Parthenon). Speakers took to reminding the assembled and sovereign multitude that their future renown and present comfort depended on their city's militarism. The naval service, and the industry needed to maintain it, provided employment for poor, voting Athenians, who otherwise might have been destitute.

Popular rule and empire made comfortable bedfellows, and bore a few genocidal rug rats: In 467 the island of Naxos was "reduced" when it attempted to leave the Delian League. Much the same happened, in 463, to Thasos. In 416, in the midst of the Peloponnesian War, mandated by a vote of the city's male population in the assembly, the Athenian navy besieged and then destroyed the Spartan colony of Melos. The women and children were enslaved, and the men executed. Five hundred Athenian colonists were sent to occupy the emptied island. It was to no avail in the long run: The war with Sparta ended badly for Athens, and the fourth century, in the traditional view, was a long twilight ending in tyranny.

Since the mid-19th century, a movement among academic historians has sought to improve this interpretation of Athenian history. The revisionist party has such names to its historical credit as Edward Bulwer-Lytton, George Grote, G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, and, more recently, Princeton's Josiah Ober. For them, the crimes of the Athenian people are to be understood as products of their culture and time: The democracy itself is held to be a radically progressive element of Athenian civilization, to be celebrated as a precursor of modern liberalism.

Crucially, the school prefers to focus on Athens's history after its empire was dismantled following the Peloponnesian War. The fourth century, which was traditionally of less interest to scholars than the fifth, has come to be lionized as the golden era of Athenian democracy, a time when the city's old religious prejudices weakened, when a new goddess named Demokratia was established in the pantheon, and new cults, of Zeus and Dionysos Eleutherios (literally "of freedom"), were celebrated. The older school of scholarship preferred to emphasize the initial appeasement of (and ultimate capitulation to) Philip of Macedonia. The new school describes these phenomena, respectively, as "realistic" and "inevitable." Just what was inevitable about Macedon, but preventable about Persia, is rarely addressed.

Given that the ideological lines of this interesting and valuable scholarly dispute have long been drawn —conservatives favoring the darker tale, progressives the revision—it is a telling curiosity of the genealogy and influence of the contemporary center-right that it is now Republicans and the Bush administration who advocate the spread of democracy abroad, cherishing it as the cure to our world's manifold ills, to be administered on a nation-by-nation basis. (That liberals now condemn such a path, despite their ideological sympathy with it in the past, seems a tad opportunistic.)

Loren J. Samons's *What's Wrong With Democracy?* seems intended, in part, as a caution to those conservatives now in the democracy-promotion camp. In just 200 pages Samons gives us a detailed historical analysis of Athenian history, very much out of the Athens-as-tragedy school. The point of the analysis is to draw lessons relevant to contemporary American policy and society.

This is an engaging, even important, book, catering both to the classicist *and* the general reading public. It aims to criticize fundamental political and social principles which most Americans, however well read, rarely question. That historical analysis serves as the tool of this inquiry is itself a principled stand, as Samons makes clear in his introduction. He explicitly seeks to avoid the popular left-wing approach (practiced by Princeton's Ober) of compiling a narrow "history of ideologies." On the other hand, he has no inclination to be a Straussian, seeking to imbibe wisdom from a few articulate voices—Thucydides, for example—across the intervening chasm of the ages.

Rather, he seeks to reaffirm, for those who have forgotten, that historical analysis is necessary to an understanding of man's society and politics. (Whether or not it is sufficient is not addressed.) It is possible to see this book as a love song to Thucydides, whose stated aim of creating something both beautiful and useful Samons explicitly sets out to imitate. Indeed, he has harsh words for those among his colleagues who long ago gave up on this.

It is a relief to discover that, as Samons is well aware of the dangers of false analogy, he does not simply seek to tell a cautionary tale, and draw some tortured moral. Rather, his central critique of democratic politics, or at least his most compelling, is fairly subtle. He feels that Americans have lost sight of something that Athenians knew very well, at least in the fifth century: That government is a means to perceived social ends, be they justice, private property, strong families, or other plausible suggestions. Our rhetoric frequently mistakes a means (democracy) for an end. Of course, when we get to thinking about it, we recall that ours is a *liberal* democracy, designed with at least one end very much in mind: to protect individual liberty (something which would have seemed curious to the Athenians, who did not share our modern notion of a state from which one needs protection, oppression being an intimate, neighbor-on-neighbor affair in those days). This retort does not impress Samons. In his own words:

> The idealization of freedom through democracy has led modern America to a precipitous position. Implicitly denying man's desire for a society based on beliefs and duties that lie beyond a system of government and the rights this government (democracy) is designed to protect, we have replaced society's extrapolitical goals with the potentially antisocial doctrines of freedom, choice, and diversity.

Samons praises the very thing about the (fifth century) Athenians—their


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strong set of social and religious practices, and the sense of political duty with which they purchased their freedom as a city—which many contemporary historians prefer to dismiss as retrograde, or at the least as uninteresting aspects of Athenian society, while he blames that very thing—democratic government—which is widely held to be their greatest achievement. He feels that the modern American polity suffers from a sort of moral drift, and that, as happened to the Athenians in the fourth century, we now like to discuss our rights more than we like to perform our duties. Liberty, after all, seems pretty thin gruel when separated from responsibility.

What sort of health, Samons inquires, can one attribute to a society in which abortion is viewed not as a violation of the duty to one's own but rather as a right, an exercise of personal liberty, which might even be celebrated?

Pretty reactionary stuff, to be sure, and all with the never-stated but always implicit suggestion that we had best understand our own regime's failings before we set out to export it around the planet. It is, of course, fair to question if Samons fully appreciates our regime's successes to the same extent that he perceives its shortcomings. His social critique, that an obsession with personal liberty has led to a deterioration of our sense of individual obligations, may well stand. The conflict between social integrity and personal liberty may well be an enduring problem for democracies.

But what of the great political achievement of modern representative and liberal democracy: the prevention of tyranny, something which the Athenians, regularly tyrannized by their own majorities, could never manage? The issue is just as much what democracy helps one to escape as it is what democracy helps one to achieve. Samons notes in his introduction that any critique of popular rule is invariably met with the counterclaim that it is, in Churchill's tired formulation, "the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried."

Fair enough—but any complete critique of democratic government must address this proverb, creaky as it is, and Samons does not. It is a separate question entirely as to whether or not liberal democracies can avoid tyrannizing others as effectively as they avoid tyrannizing themselves. Certainly oppression abroad is possible, as the liberal and democratic British Empire demonstrated not that long ago. Now the United States, inspired by an obscene act of aggression and mass murder, seeks in self-defense to take its own form of civilization abroad. In Kabul and Baghdad, the people are struggling to build liberal democracies, underpinned by Islamic social practices and beliefs. In Cairo and Beirut—not to say in Hong Kong and Katmandu—people march by the tens, even hundreds, of thousands for their freedom, and for the democratic means to that end. Samons raises the question: Will history judge our polity's efforts on their behalf to be noble, as many of us think they are, or to be just another recitation of an oft-told tale: the oppression of the many by the many?

Corbis / Michael Nicholson

*The House of Commons, 1742*

If we find Samons's critique insufficiently disquieting, it is worth considering that the Athenians, too, were exceptionalists of sorts. Take, for evidence, Pericles' famous Funeral Oration, as transmitted by Thucydides, which commemorated those who had died battling Sparta during the Peloponnesian War's first year. This masterpiece of rhetoric has been read in many ways. Revisionists regard it as a startling, prescient ode to the Enlightenment principles of liberty and equality, and to the democratic form of government which is their source. Samons seeks to correct this, observing that Pericles is proud of Athens's "progres-



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sive" achievements only to the extent that they aid its renown and dominion over the other Greeks.

Yet another reader, Paul Ludwig, has recently argued (in his *Eros and Polis*) that what interests Pericles is love—the romantic kind. His oration depicts the city as something beautiful, a place of glory, a school for all Hellas, and he encourages his audience literally to "become her lovers." But love, famously prone to visual impairment, has trouble distinguishing fair objects from foul, and so it was at Athens. Athenian exceptionalism, at least in the political form which Pericles articulates, is based on Athenian power, and so was bound to come up short, power being a passing and decidedly unexceptional achievement. (It is a lasting irony of the Funeral Oration, which Samons justly notes, that Pericles is dismissive of Athens's cultural achievements, as compared with her political success, given that the cultural legacy truly is exceptional.)

The American response to the Funeral Oration is the Gettysburg Address. Abraham Lincoln clearly modeled his speech on Pericles' remarks, at least in part; but the point of interest is that Lincoln's words are genuinely idealistic. He praises the Founders not for securing dominion or renown, but for conceiving a new nation in liberty, and for establishing a government dedicated to a hypothesis regarding human nature, that men are created equal.

Pericles also speaks of equality, but not as an end in itself. Rather, he portrays it as one more means to social success, to military victory, to lasting renown. He wants his listeners to fight not for their liberty and equality but for their *polis*, for Athens, right or wrong. The Gettysburg Address asks for nothing of the sort. A full critique of American democracy will have to struggle with Lincoln, who was—and remains—the ablest spokesman for our own exceptionalism. We may hope that the extent to which Lincoln's words differ from Pericles' words, and to which our national actions are distinguished accordingly, is the extent to which we can avoid the old imperial fate. ♦

# Magnificent Obsession

*The long road from ESPN to recovery.*

**BY CHRIS CONNOLLY**

Hello. My name is Chris Connolly and I'm a sports addict. I say I *am* a sports addict because, even though I recently succeeded in abstaining from all sports for several months, one never really stops being a sports addict. One is always just one drag bunt or foul shot away from sitting in the tub with sports radio blaring while re-reading analysis of games one watched the night before.

I did some things I'm not particularly proud of during my addiction phase. At my wedding, our photographer made a pocket-sized box score out of cardboard and held it up at the back of the room so I could track the progress of a baseball game. Three years later, while my wife was in labor with our first child, I had my brother sending me text messages with updates on Yankees/Red Sox. Talk about the "crack" of the bat . . .

I was pretty much a full-time sports fan. Which is to say, I consumed sports information *all* the time. I listened to sports radio during the day, watched sporting events at night, and had radios all over the house that I flipped on and off as I went from room to room. I would even go to sleep listening to games on a walkman. I doubt there was a major (or minor) occurrence in the American sports world over the last 10 years that I didn't know about within 15 minutes.

Did I know my sports fandom was over the top? Of course. But I never felt compelled to do anything about it until recently. After all, people devote time to things a lot more ridiculous than knowing who the Yankees' top third base prospect is (Eric Duncan). Until a few months ago, I was a highly functional, even exceedingly happy, sports addict. I was like a tranquil sea anemone, letting my tendrils drift in a rich current of sports data. Then, one day in November 2006, the New York Giants motored by and sheared off my tender little appendages.

If you don't recall, the 2006 New York Giants were a train wreck—or, to keep the metaphor going, a shipwreck. Actually, thinking about it now, if you took a train and shot it off into the sea, the resulting carnage would mimic last season's campaign quite nicely.

Every football team tries to create an identity. Even non-sports fans probably know that the Steelers cast themselves as a gritty, hard-nosed bunch and the Raiders as a gang of thugs. And the Giants? Well, the Giants are stupid. Stocked with as much talent as any team in the league, the 2006 New York Giants specialized in drama, bickering, and snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. With an unflagging commitment to knuckleheadedness, they engineered some of the most staggering come-from-ahead losses of all time.

And the G Men didn't leave their team identity on the field, either. Not by a long shot. It would have been impossible for them to be stupider off the field than on it, but they managed to battle to a tie. There was criticism of Coach Tom Coughlin via the media on more than one occasion. Michael Strahan, the team's defensive leader, who wasn't even playing due to injury, nearly assaulted a female journalist at a press conference. At midseason, the team's MVP candidate, Tiki Barber, announced his retirement for no reason. And while this freak show spiraled around him, Coach Coughlin stub-

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Corbis / Wally McNamee

*Washington Redskins fans, 1991*

bornly brayed his team watchword: "Discipline."

Have you ever heard those stories about surgery patients who wake up in the middle of operations unable to do anything but suffer horribly until the anesthesia wears off? That's what watching the Giants was like. Every Sunday I would wake up to find myself sitting in front of the television while this gang of millionaires plied their trade. When I wasn't kicking the ottoman through the living room wall, I was fielding calls from my father and brothers who, being similarly afflicted, would phone me to gnash their teeth and cry.

Since sports are all about numbers, let's look at it this way: Generally, I kick my ottoman through the living room wall once, maybe twice, per season. So let's say 1.5 for football, 1.5 for baseball, and 1.5 for a combination of basketball/soccer and other games. This puts my lifetime annual OKA at 4.5. During the 2006 football season alone, that number spiked to 4.0. Then on November 26 the Giants played the Tennessee Titans. Addicts can generally cite a moment when they hit rock bottom; this game was mine.

It started out well for the G Men. Dominating the game, they established a 21-0 lead by the end of the third quarter and showed no sign of slowing. My phone was silent, my heart was beating normally. Even the ottoman exuded a quiet confidence. Then the sleeping Giants woke up: "Twenty-one to zero?" they seemed to say. "This doesn't seem right."

Over the game's final 10 minutes they put on an incredible display of fumbling, holding, and interceptitude. When the smoke cleared, the bewildered Titans had won, 24-21, and my ottoman had been reduced to kindling. The phone rang, but I couldn't answer. I went into the kitchen and tried to prepare dinner, but my hands were numb. I thought about going for a drive, but decided it would probably end in my death. Instead, I took a shower.

Normally, as I've said, I listen to sports radio in the shower. But this day, the very thought left me queasy. I made the water as hot as possible and let it run over my shoulders. For the first time in probably a decade, there was no chatter to accompany the rushing water. And out of the silence, a realization came: I was wasting my time. I was investing hours of emotion and study into something that returned only pain. For me as well as my furniture.

I did the math: I'm 33 years old and started paying attention to sports at about age 10. I closely follow three teams: The Giants, the Knicks, and the Yankees. This means, over the last 23 years, I've followed 69 seasons of basketball, baseball, and football. The Knicks last won a championship the year I was born (1973) so I didn't share in that glory. The Giants won Super Bowls in 1987 and 1991; the Yankees, probably the most successful team in the history of sports, won the World Series in 1977 and 1978. But I don't remember those years. They also won in 1996, 1998, 1999, and 2000. Sadly, for all but one of those years, I lived in Europe and, in that pre-Internet era, could only follow the games by way of newspaper reports my grandmother mailed me.

So to sum up, out of 69 handwringing seasons, I have shared in the joy of three championships. Every other campaign has ended in failure. And compared with sports fans from other cities, I'm cleaning up!

Wasn't there a better way to spend my time, I wondered? What if I took all my sports hours and worked on my abs? What if I worked on reading the classics? Hell, what if I worked on work? I decided there and then to find out, declaring a three-month morato-



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rium on sports fandom. I would not read, watch, listen to, or talk about sports. I called my brother to tell him about my experiment.

"Oh, you're experimenting with giving up sports," he said. "Are you conducting a corollary study about what it's like to be a homosexual raising a child?"

I was off to a good start.

As with most addiction battles, the first effects of withdrawal were physical. I'd get in the shower and reach for the radio, or I'd turn on the television and begin to tune in a sports channel. But once I got past the blunt-force desire to absorb sports, I discovered the true seed of my addiction: I missed the background noise. Accustomed to the calming drip of sports info in my ear, I had trouble sleeping. I lay restlessly tossing in bed while thoughts raced through my skull. Unchecked by updates on the misdeeds of erstwhile running backs, ideas and fears plagued me ceaselessly. I realized that, for the last decade or so, I'd been immersed in a constant and inoculating flow of sports information. I missed the drone.

My addiction, I swiftly realized, was twofold. Yes, I yearned to know what was happening to my teams, but I could deal with such cravings. What I really wanted was to get back into the Matrix of the sports community. Some people are always listening to music. Others flip on soap operas or the weather channel when alone. I listen to sports radio. It's a calming background buzz that keeps me from thinking full-time about work woes, money, or Iraq. It's also a place to debate like-minded people around the world.

Talk radio has been called America's Last Neighborhood, and during my experiment I realized that this could not be more accurate. Although we've never met, I know far more about Jerome in the Bronx and Mike in Manhattan (callers to my favorite station) than I do about my flesh-and-blood neighbors. There's a man named Frank who lives next door to me, and I know exactly two things about him: He watches truck racing day and night; and, for some reason, he carefully leaves a four-inch strip of grass unmowed where his lawn borders my driveway. Beyond that, we might as well live in different countries.

On the radio, it's a different story. I know my fellow listeners' hopes and dreams. There was a woman named Doris Bauer, or "Doris in Rego Park," who used to call New York's WFAN. She was a passionate Mets fan whose commentaries were frequently interrupted by bouts of wheezing and coughing. She championed the Mets, in good times and bad, and I always looked forward to her nightly appearances. A few years ago, at one in the morning, the hour when Doris usually called, her favorite host reported the news that she had died. Lying in bed listening, I wanted to cry; it felt as if I had lost a friend.

I learned a lot during my embargo. I rode my bike, tore through my library reserve list, and started to embrace those late-night thoughts rather than banishing them with an onslaught of white noise. But most important, I learned that sports fandom is about more than your team. Sports fans are a family. We share the same goals, contemplate the same issues, and rely on one another for support and discussion. A team is more than a collection of athletes; it's a geographically unbounded neighborhood. Fans root for uniforms first, athletes second: This is why we can hate the players and love our teams.

Why do wins and losses matter? Because they matter to the people in your neighborhood, they matter to your friends—even the ones in Rego Park you've never met. Yes, I'm a sports addict, but I know now that it's not such a bad thing. If I can restrict myself to the actual *games* and stay away from the pre-games, post-games, and game reports, I'll be okay.

That said, the other day I got an email from my brother that got my heart racing. The subject line: "NFL camps open in 100 days!"

I could quit anytime. ♦

# Kiss of the Spider-Man

*The midnight faithful are underwhelmed by number three.* **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

It's 12:21 A.M. on Friday morning, May 4, and at last the words "Feature Presentation" appear on the movie theater screen. The movie was supposed to begin at 12:01 A.M., but of course there were 20 minutes of previews. No matter that we're there after midnight in order to witness the first public viewing of *Spider-Man 3*, which ought to spare us the endless onslaught of coming attractions. We are still forced to sit through trailers for *Rush Hour 3* (it's set in Paris!) and *The Bourne Ultimatum* (the amnesiac special agent recovers his identity!) and five or six other movies made specifically to cater to the tastes of males between the ages of 12 and 24.

**Spider-Man 3**
Directed by Sam Raimi

This is Hollywood's preferred target audience and the only reliable source of in-theater moviegoers left in America, and since Hollywood hopes every one of those moviegoers will be seeing *Spider-Man 3* by the end of next weekend, it is going to take advantage of its captive audience no matter the time.

A baby burbles and coos. Yes, someone has brought a six-month-old to a

*John Podhoretz, columnist for the* New York Post, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*



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midnight showing of *Spider-Man 3*. I briefly consider calling Children's Services on my cell phone, but my guess is that the parent thinks he's doing something special for the young one to bring him to this historic first showing of a movie that will show up on the TNT cable channel every two weeks by the time the baby is six.

During the brief gap between the "Feature Presentation" logo and the beginning of the movie, the screen goes black. "Peter Parker!" a young man shouts, invoking the name of Spider-Man's alter ego. "Yeah!" someone else responds. But there isn't much energy to their call-and-response. This doesn't feel like one of those electric moviegoing experiences that has its audience buzzing with prospective excitement.

The audience seems, oddly, more dutiful than thrilled. Its members are doing what they believe they are supposed to do. They are greeting the third film in the most successful superhero movie series in motion-picture history just as they greeted the arrival of the first *Spider-Man* movie five years ago. Their attendance tonight indicates that they are grateful consumers. The two previous *Spider-Man* pictures were exceptionally good and emotionally satisfying popcorn movies—the sequel, especially—and the series has earned their support.

It also indicates they are lemmings. Sony Pictures needs them to line up and do their part to create the impression that the movie is such a monster hit people simply have to see it—and see it again and again. Sony has ponied up as much as $350 million to make and market *Spider-Man 3*. It is the most expensive movie ever, the first to top the cost of 1963's *Cleopatra* in constant dollars. (*Cleopatra* is the source of the greatest movie-set anecdote ever, though it might be apocryphal. Filming went on so long at the Cinecittà studios in Rome, the story goes, that somewhere around the ninth month a minor actress supposedly demanded, "Who do I have to sleep with to get off this picture?")

Even though preopening surveys revealed that an astounding number of moviegoers were aware that *Spider-Man 3* was coming soon, Sony has broken the bank advertising it. It can't afford to take chances. This movie must have the biggest opening weekend in movie history—outdoing *Pirates of the Caribbean 2*'s $135 million—or the negative buzz will begin spreading outward from the blogs to *Entertainment Tonight* and then drift into the common conversation and infect its box office future like a deadly virus.

Columbia Pictures

*Tobey Maguire in costume*

Despite reports earlier in the week that the movie is doing huge business outside the United States, Sony has reason for concern. The prerelease reviews haven't been very good, in distinct contrast to the justifiably enthusiastic reception for *Spider-Man 2*, easily the best entry in the superhero genre.

Director Sam Raimi and his co-screenwriters Alvin Sargent and Ivan Raimi have decided that *Spider-Man 3* will have more of everything. The first two movies had one villain each. *Spider-Man 3* has three, and has two fight scenes with each villain and a climactic battle that involves all of them. That's seven fight scenes in all. That's a lot of fight scenes.

The first two movies both had a scene in which a woman falls through the air and is caught by Spider-Man. *Spider-Man 3* has two such scenes. Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire) mooned over the beauteous Mary Jane Watson (Kirsten Dunst) in the first two. Here he moons over Mary Jane, has a fling with his college lab partner, and flirts with two other potential love interests.

There's so much plot and incident in *Spider-Man 3* that it's kind of a miracle it only lasts two hours and 20 minutes. Several of the superhero battles are really stunning, particularly one in which Spider-Man goes at it with a villain made of sand in an underground grotto filled with subway tunnels and tracks. And yet the movie is enchanting and memorable in the manner of its predecessors when it gets quiet, loopy, and silly.

There's a wonderful bit straight out of 1930s screwball comedy in which Peter Parker must deal with an officious French maître d' (played by the peerlessly lantern-jawed character actor Bruce Campbell). A sequence during which Peter turns into a vainglorious jerk is similarly delightful. The emotional kick in the *Spider-Man* series is that no matter what feats of strength Spider-Man performs, Peter Parker is still a goofy, nerdy boy. He's lovable not because he's a hero but because, at root, he is and will always be an awkward teenager.

Alas, there's nowhere near enough of the goofy stuff, and too much conflicted superhero stuff, and the audience at this midnight show feels it. Peter Parker cries at the end of the movie's climactic scene, and my fellow moviegoers respond not with empathy but with mocking laughter. Nobody was laughing at Peter Parker during the first two *Spider-Man*s.

*Spider-Man 3* gets the job done. It's a decent piece of work, and it has one superb performance (by Thomas Haden Church as a mournful crook). But as the crowd files out at 2:41 A.M., I don't get the sense they'll be in line at midnight for *Spider-Man 4*. ♦



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# Parody

***"James E. McGreevey, the nation's first openly gay governor, has become an Episcopalian and wants to become a priest in that faith, according to a published report. . . . In his book published last year,* The Confession, *the former [New Jersey] governor said he resorted to anonymous homosexual trysts at highway rest stops as he wrestled with desires frowned on by his [Catholic] faith."* —Associated Press, *May 3, 2007***

## IDI AMIN ENROLLS IN CULINARY CLASS

Former Ugandan Strongman Wants 'To Humanize' Cooking

By DEXTER

## 'America's Most Wanted' Names O.J. Simpson Cohost

Ex-Football Star's Comments Sure to be Incisive

By Lana Buckley

daughter, who stated publicly in 1999

## Kim Jong Il to co-chair U.N. Human Rights Commission

*Priorities Include Population Control, Loyalty*

ALLEN EDWARDS

villages on the western border it shares with

## *Joseph Goebbels Tapped to Head Radio Free Europe*

Will Focus on Minority Rights, Living Space

## Gerhard Schröder to Advise Gazprom

We're Not Even Joking Here

By Uschi Helfzig

## Bill Clinton To Serve as Judge for National Cheerleading Competition

*Former President to Present 'Spirit Stick'*

the weekly Standard
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